SQUA TRONT 8

"Squa Tronk, for those who like their action heroes in the prehistoric mode."
— The New York Times, 11/26/77

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Art Credits. Jack Davis: covers. Roy G. Krenkel: inside covers. George Evans: pg. 57. Wallace Wood: Pgs. 54, 55 and 62.

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THE EC FANZINES
PART 3: THE DALLAS CONNECTION

In early 1954 Texas again became a focus of EC fanzine activity when two close friends in Dallas, George Jennings and Mike May, each started up their own publication. In this effort they had the support, and occasionally the help, of several other EC fan friends, including Vaughn Ferguson, Benny Sodek and Randy Brown (whose *EC S-F Mags Fanzine* is described in *Squa Tront* # 5).

They had already been in contact with other fans around the country, and read other fanzines. Shortly before they started publishing they called Bhob Stewart long distance and had a three-way conversation (with May on Jennings' extension) about their plans. Bhob may have sent them his list of subscribers and some unpublished features left over from his folded *EC Fan Bulletin.*

Mike and George had gotten to know each other because their fathers worked for the same television station, and their fathers' field of endeavor may have contributed to their interest in journalism. Mike admits quite frankly that the publishing aspect interested him more than the comics themselves. George was more the true blue EC fan; he initiated Mike who then also became enthused, but never as much as George.

Mike's effort, *The EC Fan Journal,* was plugged in EC's *Fan-Addict Bulletin* # 4, September 1954, and is probably the better remembered fanzine. George's publication was titled *The EC World Press* (changed to the more modest *The EC Press* by the fourth issue). Both were really quite substantial publications by the standards of the time. The *Journal* ran six issues; the *Press* ran at least four. Unfortunately, full coverage of these two fanzines is just not possible because only three issues are known to still exist.

Tom Inge still has an issue of the *Journal* in his files: it's dated March 6, 1954 and seems to be the second issue. Inge, who's now Chairman of the Department of English at Virginia Commonwealth University, undoubtedly kept the copy because he has an article, "How to Keep EC's in Mint Condition," in the issue. Needless to say, Tom's formula for keeping comics—professional binding or *Classics Illustrated* binders that hold the comics in with rubber bands—would not impress today's sophisticated collector.

The cover of the issue is (yes, again) a floorplan of the EC offices, supplied by George Snowden, and Snowden's article "The EC Offices," reprinted from *The EC Fan Bulletin* # 1, is inside, considerably shorter without Stewart's interlineations. There's a parody of the poem "Casey at the Bat" by Nigel Cadell, a Newburyport, Mass. contributor to Stewart's *Fan Bulletin.* A News Note from Stewart tells of EC suing *Get Lost* for aping *Mad*'s cover format, and states that Harry Harrison had written some stories for *Get Lost.* (One wonders if Harrison wrote *Get Lost*'s incisive and very funny parody of EC's horror comics, "The Sewer Keeper," "drawn by Sickley.") Finally, a short letter page indicates that perhaps the first issue was no more auspicious than the second.

From this point we're forced to jump to the sixth and last issue of the *Fan Journal,* of which several copies are extant. Your chronicler sent an inquiry in 1955 or 1956 to all the fanzines that had been plugged by EC, and Mike May was the only one to reply, kindly sending on his last extra copy gratis, pasting a new address label over the address that had been previously written on the back page. (Remember that most fanzines were sent out then without envelopes.) Until this moment I never thought to look under that label, but now I discover that the book was originally addressed to Sen. Estes Kefauver, who at the time was heading the Senate committee investigating comic books. Who knows why it was never sent out.

The sixth issue represents a dramatic change from the earlier one. During the intervening period Mike had acquired a number of well known EC fans as contributors. He'd also switched from hectograph to mimeograph for all but the cover and a few spot illustrations.

Bill Spicer led off the issue with another impressive cover. Bill also apparently did a cover for an earlier issue. Bhob Stewart had done a cover for # 6, but technical reproduction problems forced it to be held over for a 'next issue' which never came out.

"Balloon Talk" a column of news notes and opinion by Marty Jukovsky, had appeared in earlier issues and ran a substantial page and a half in # 6. It was supplemented by an additional page of similar items by Mike. Perhaps the most amazing thing about the whole issue is that the news of EC's discontinuing all crime and horror comics is a three and a half line item buried in this column! Another of Mike's items illustrates graphically the mood of the times:

> Ft. Worth recently banned all crime and horror comics, pocket books and phonograph records that had anything to do with violence. This includes Dell's famous westerns, *Superman,* and other DC publications. A $200 fine goes to anyone disregarding the order.
>
> The *Dallas Morning News* recently finished a six day editorial on "Our Comic Book Menace" in which they blasted every comic book that had anything in the least way to do with violence. I'd say that more people in Dallas are acquainted with EC now than they were before the editorial.
>
> Even though it is not official, the pressure from the newspapers has forced most dealers to quit handling crime and horror books, and it's getting to the point where you can't buy a Walt Disney comic without being blackballed. (Woe, woe . . . I'm gonna hafta start buying my EC's from you fans who live in smaller towns . . . I can't get 'em anywhere!)

The prolific Larry Stark also contributed regularly to the *Journal.* In the fourth issue he wrote an essay about the work of George Evans that is remembered by some as his best piece of comics criticism for fanzines. Larry had high praise for Evans' work at EC, and attempted an in-depth probe of his techniques and compositional approach. His column "One Man's Opinion" appeared in issues 5 and 6, and probably most other issues.

In the sixth issue Larry devotes six single spaced typewritten pages to analysis of the latest six EC books. He starts out by explicitly stating a tenet that was always implicit in his comics criticism:

> Let me hasten to point out that this column isn't raking any *artist* over the coals unless I say so fore and

aft and wave big fat flags. I'm interested in how a story is plotted, constructed, written, and (as an afterthought mostly) presented by picture.

This is a sensible point of view when reviewing the comics of an editor whose concept of the form was very similar. But, as I've said elsewhere, I prefer criticism that focuses on the visual elements that work to further a narrative.

A separate two page article by Larry, "Dr. Cure-All's Miracle Method," is also in the same issue. The doctor under attack "claims to have proof that crime, juvenile delinquency, sex-mania, youthful experiments with dope, race hatred, and practically any other juvenile social problem a city has to deal with, can be eradicated by the mere elimination of certain literature." Neither the 'certain literature' nor the doctor are further identified in the article; that was hardly necessary. Stark's arguments are well reasoned out and expressed, as seen in this excerpt:

> Most of the aroused citizens also neglect to study the learned doctor's background, his experience, or his researches. Were they to do so they might realize that this self styled expert on the youth of the nation may only properly claim expert knowledge of the city slum areas of the North Eastern United States, and that of small communities, in which his type of bluenosed dictatorship thrives easiest, he knows absolutely nothing.
>
> They might also realize, were they to think a bit of his ideas, that everything he claims to have discovered clinically and scientifically was, in reality, unearthed primarily to prove a "truth" the veracity of which he believed implicitly, and that under such conditions even the most implausible of cause and effect relationships were already pre-judged and counted as "extremely important data." Were they to think at all, however, I doubt if any of these self-righteous protectionists could long believe the perfection of the panacea. It might become evident by the light of thoughtful speculation, that, were such a plan wholly perfect and sure fire, the doctor's book need not be so concerned so often with proving his enemies and his doubters to be either hired assassins or misinformed idiots. Such violent broadsides against the slightest words of criticism remind me of a certain Senator's claiming that he "must be anti-Communist, because of the attacks the Communists make upon him," and claiming also that his attackers "must be Communists, or why would they be attacking an anti-Communist?"

The final feature in *The EC Fan Journal* # 6 is a "WS-WSF File," listing the title and artist of each story in each issue of these two comic titles through issue 25, with other incidental data. Similar checklists of other EC titles had apparently appeared in previous issues. The format of this feature was the same as Bhob Stewart's earlier "*Vault of Horror* Index" in *The EC Fan Bulletin* # 2, and very similar to Fred von Bernewitz's later effort (no accident, as we shall see in the next chapter). Cartoons by Bob Allen and Kent Barber, ads, and letters from Ted White, sf fan Ron Ellik, Bob Allen and EC's own Nancy Siegel round out the issue.

As noted before, Mike was very interested in the publishing aspects of fandom. A good working symbiotic relationship seems to have developed in the *Journal*, with writers and artists Jukovsky, Stark, Spicer, Allen, et al, happy to contribute material and May happy to be editor-publisher. The lack of issues 3 to 5 is certainly a glaring gap in this series on old fanzines, for all the evidence indicates that they were very good examples of the genre.

Like many other EC fans, Mike eventually moved on to science fiction fandom. He published six issues of an sf fanzine, *Epitome*, which he remembers as being a much more sophisticated effort than the *Journal*. Mike, still a resident of Texas, is now a lawyer and has, he says, "been through enough political activity to curl a normal man's hair."

Only the fourth issue of George Jennings' *The EC World Press* has come to light, this one found in the files of Bernard Krigstein. He had received a copy when it came out because the major portion of the issue is devoted to Bhob Stewart's very good essay on Krigstein. As this essay was reprinted in *Squa Tront* # 6, it will not be discussed in detail here.

The other feature in *Press* # 4 is a review column, "The Morgue of Insanity," by Mike Reynolds, apparently a regular feature. Unlike Stark, Reynolds reviewed old EC's at random, and mainly concentrated on telling the plot of each story. Reynolds mentions that he will soon become assistant editor for another fanzine (but doesn't give the title). The remainder of the issue consists of a parody of Longfellow's "Hiawatha" by Paul Shuster, cartoons by Kent Barber and a letter page. From the letter page we learn that the previous issue had a piece of fiction, news about Wally Wood, and was printed in red and blue ink (probably hectographed—# 4 is mimeographed). The cover of the issue is by Jennings. Again, it is unfortunate that unavailability of the other issues of the *Press* has to curtail coverage.

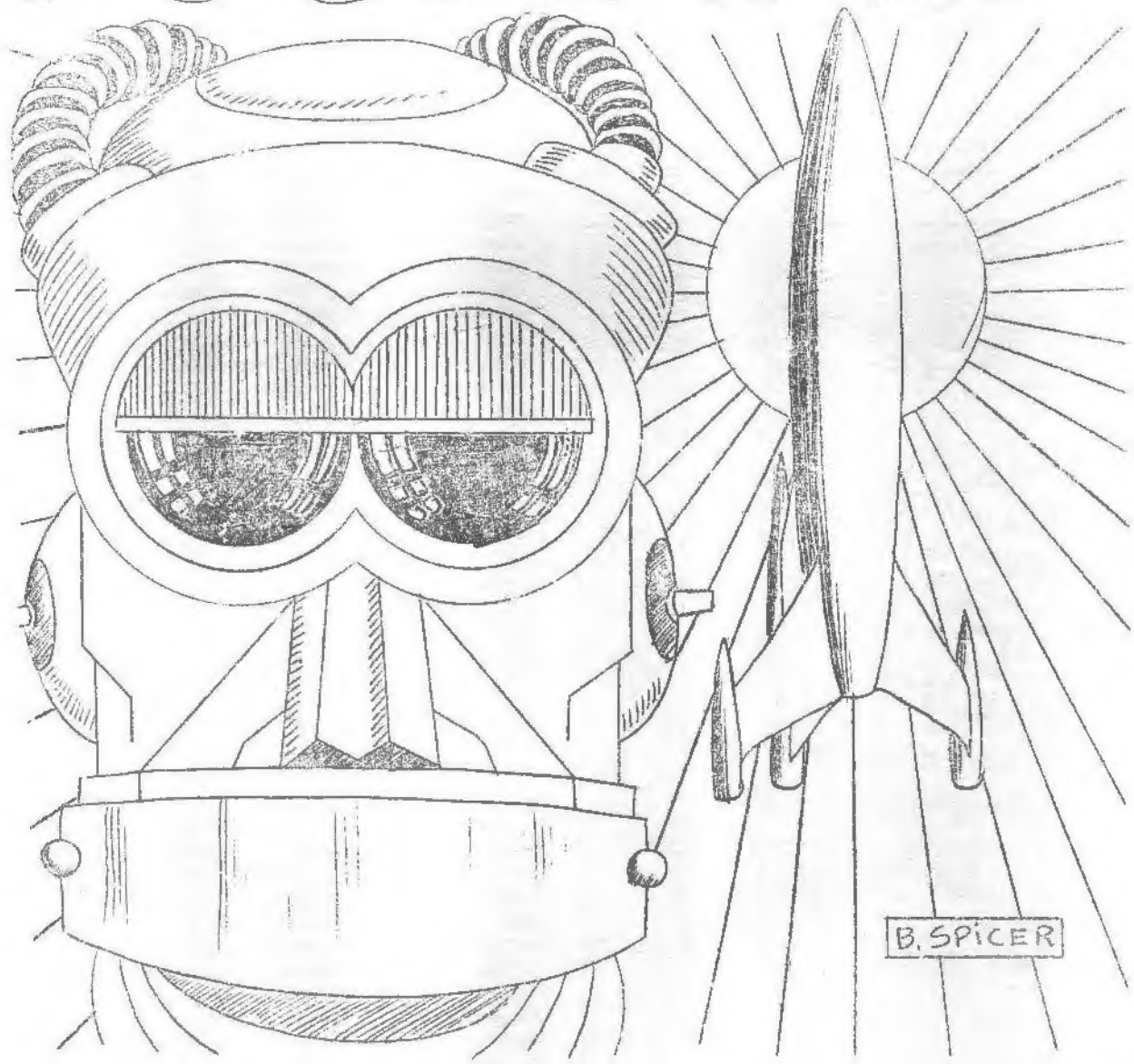
George Jennings also 'graduated' to science fiction fandom, where he was active during the late fifties and early sixties. In 1959 he and Mike met Bhob in person for the first time. Stewart and Jennings became friends for awhile, but by this time EC was a subject about which their interest was minimal. May's lack of interest was even more total, and once he even left the room when the conversation turned to EC.

That same year Jennings, at the time a disk jockey, was becoming increasingly interested in Golden Age radio. He was one of those who first began to develop that area of interest into a fandom of sorts. In 1970 he published seven or eight issues of an old time radio fanzine, and it's a subject that still interests him. Today, he continues to work in radio, running an all-news radio station, KXXA, in Little Rock, Arkansas.

He's attended several comic conventions, but is rather turned off by what he's seen, stating, "Everybody seems to just care more about how much they can get for the comics than what they are. We wanted them just so we could look at them, read them and talk about them."

NO. 6

THE EC FAN JOURNAL



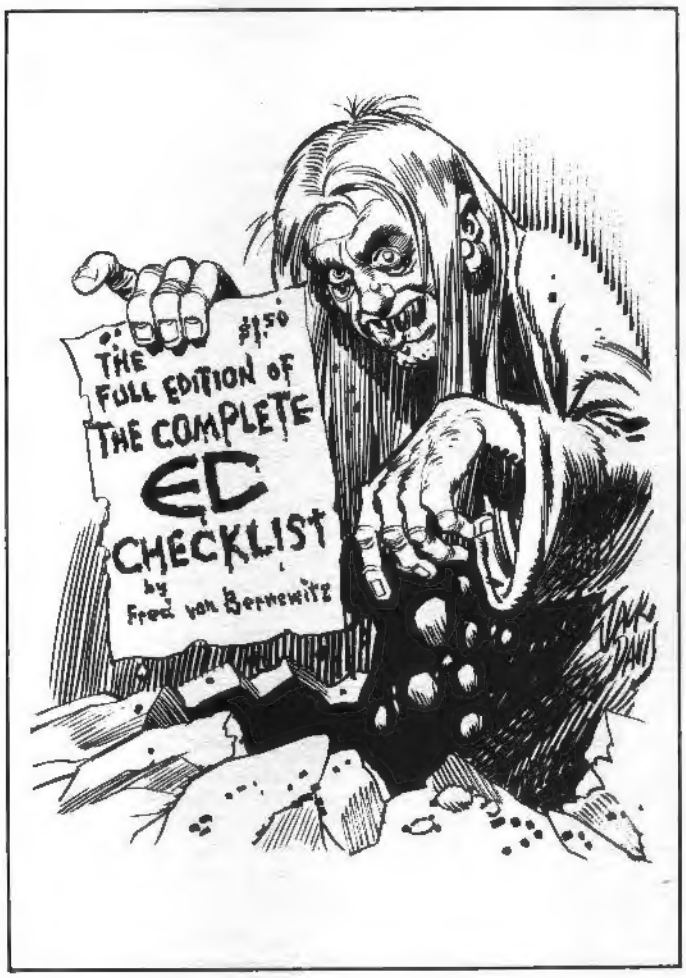
PART 4: BIBLIOGRAPHICS

Fred von Bernewitz previously appeared in our narrative as a contributor to *Potrzebie* (in *Squa Tront* # 7). Now, as the compiler of *The Complete EC Checklist*, he takes stage center.

Fred came in contact with EC fandom through Ted White. Undoubtedly their first mutual interest was science fiction, and they probably started a correspondence through the letter page of a newsstand sf magazine. They had a few phone conversations before they met: not many though, because, though Silver Spring, Md. (Fred) and Falls Church, Va. (Ted) are both suburbs of Washington, D.C., they're at opposite ends of town in different states, making it a long distance toll call.

It was easier for Fred to ride his beat up old bicycle the 13 miles each way across town for personal visits, or to get together about half way between at meetings of the Washington Science Fiction Association (WSFA), a group Ted later became president of.

Both Fred and Ted were active EC fans, and through plugs and correspondents Fred had obtained some EC fanzines, among them Mike May's *EC Fan Journal* with its checklists of a few of the EC titles. Fred found these very useful and thought it would be nice if all the EC titles could be checklisted in a complete and concise form. So, quite simply, he set out to produce such a publication.



He combined Mike's data with listings prepared from his own collection, and sent it off to Mike, Larry Stark and others. Before he was finished, perhaps a dozen people had furnished additional information.

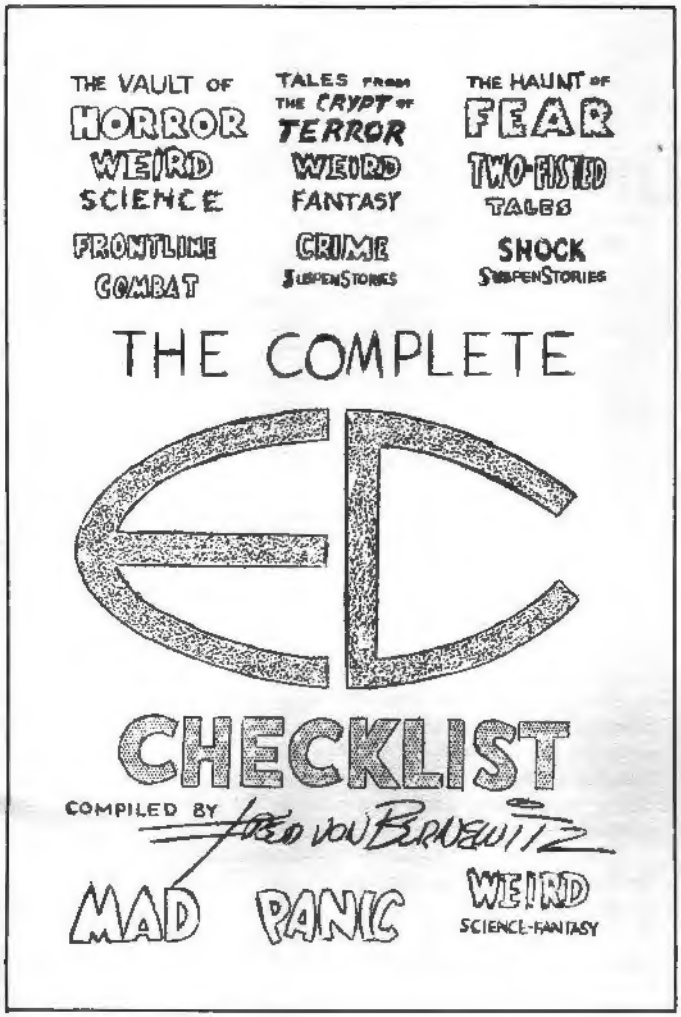
One valued source was George Evans. Fred and George started corresponding around that time and have been friends ever since. How they came in contact is unclear; most likely Larry Stark had put the two in touch. For the few EC's that he couldn't locate—and where identification of the art was difficult—Fred wrote to George, who went into the EC office, got the data, and responded to Fred. Bill Gaines probably also supplied some data directly.

As had Bhob Stewart before him, Fred called upon the services of the ubiquitous mimeo of Ted White's QWERTYUIOPress (Ted advising Fred how to make his own stencils).

One of the most amazing things about that period to this writer is the incredible speed with which fannish activity progressed. The first edition of the *Checklist* ran 56 half sized pages (8½ by 5½ inches). Stencils had to be cut apart, typed, proofed, rejoined, and run off. Then the paper was cut in half and the book was collated and stapled by hand. The amount of work involved can't really be grasped by someone who hasn't actually published in this fashion. The collating alone, in this case 1,500 sheets of paper, is quite a task. Yet, less than 50 days passed between the time Fred received a May 16, 1955 letter from George Evans with some final data and the time Nancy Siegel sent "$4 for 16 additional copies of the *Checklist*" on July 6, 1955, because "everyone around the office wants a copy for himself."

Nancy Siegel's note had a P.S.: "Will try to work a plug into one of the magazines for you if we can get it passed [sic] Judge Murphy." A few months later—on a postcard postmarked October 25, 1955, to be exact—Bill Gaines advised Fred, "You're getting your plug for the *Checklist* in the last comic we turn out, ISF # 33. Watch for it. —Bill." The story of this plug is probably well known. EC *didn't* get it past Judge Murphy—they didn't try, but simply added it to a text feature *after* the page had been approved by the Comics Code Authority. This is a bit ironic considering that the famous battle with the Code over the sweat on the Negro spaceman's brow in "Judgment Day" was fought and won in this same issue of *Incredible*.

At this point your chronicler must inject a personal note. The sticky quarter I sent in response to that plug was my first contact with fandom, a pebble that brought me into contact with ever expanding ripples of friends and acquaintances that still continues today. Along with my quarter I asked Fred a hundred questions, to which he quickly responded. In his first letter, he offered me *Weird Science-Fantasy* # 24, *Weird Fantasy* # 21 and *Valor* # 1, all three for 25¢ including postage, suggested that I subscribe to *Hoohah* and *Potrzebie*, offered to lend me his collection of fanzines, and suggested Bill Spicer as a possible correspondent. Thus began a correspondence between Fred and myself that lasted many years, until we



became fellow New Yorkers.

Incidentally, Fred did send me his fanzines in 1956, and at his instructions I sent them on to another fan, Ted Sturm, in North Carolina. Sturm, in turn sent them on to another fan, and so on, until eventually they got lost. About 15 years later Fred got a postcard from Paris from the last recipient (who had formerly lived in Canada), who still had some of the fanzines and offered to return them. (One of these, thus redeemed, was an issue of *Potrzebie* used for researching Part II of this series.)

The *Checklist*, of course, was produced without any idea that it would be plugged in an EC comic. EC had bought 16 and received several complimentary copies; over a dozen were given out to those who had provided data, and the remaining 20 or so of the initial printing were sold to various fans before the plug appeared.

A second printing was necessary, and in January 1956, 200 additional copies were run off. Although a few stencils were done over to improve the quality and to correct errors, and bigger staples were used, the second printing is really identical to the first in all important aspects. Fred sent out a flyer to owners of the first printing offering this improved edition for a nickel. A third printing of 75 copies was run off in June 1956 from the same stencils. Incidentally, the second and third printings are identified as such on the last page of the book.

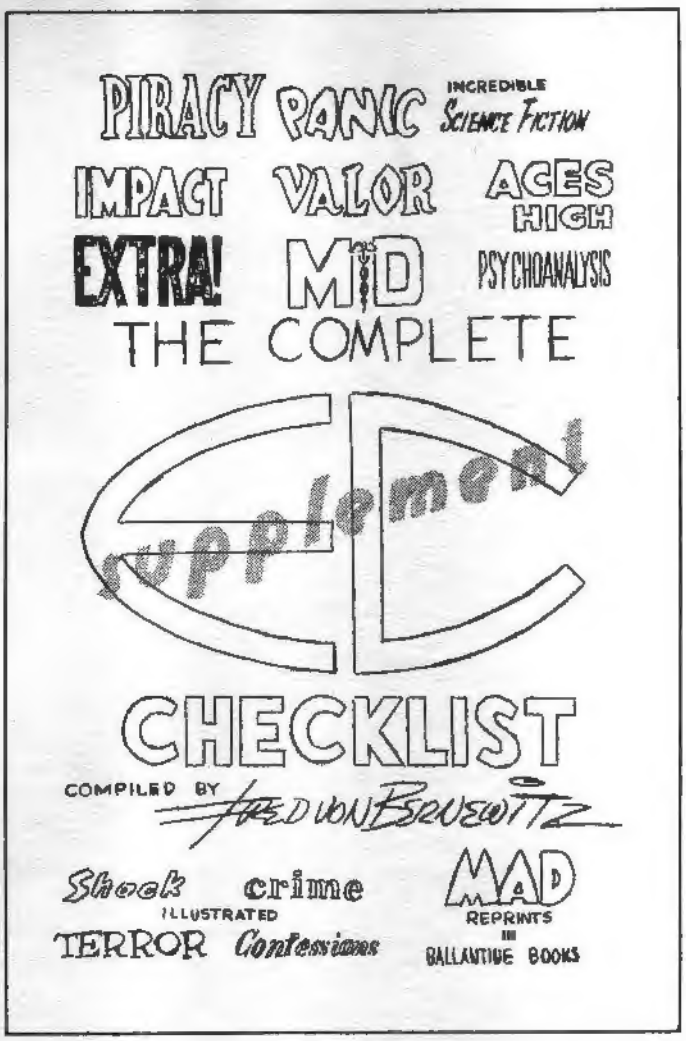
I haven't mentioned that the *Checklist* cost 25¢ including postage, which entitled the reader to free yearly supplements. All the New Trend titles were listed in their entirety in the first edition, except *Panic*, which was listed through issue # 8. Fortunately for Fred's finances, EC's additional comics output only required a single 24 page *Supplement*, containing the New Direction and Picto-Fiction titles, and some odds and ends. This was issued March 1958 in an edition of 250 copies, and sold separately for 10¢.

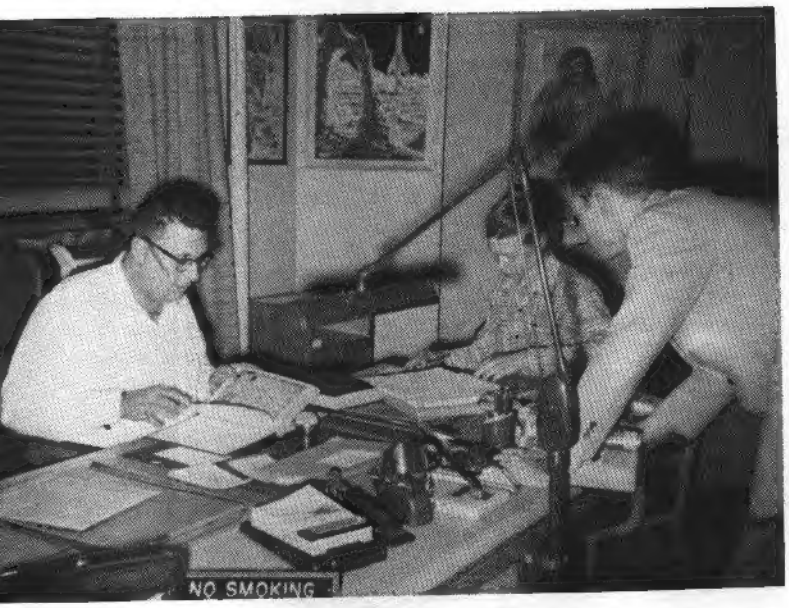
Even while Fred was working on the original *Checklist* he was planning a complete pre-Trend checklist, and had made an appeal for data in the *Checklist*. To pick up this thread of the story, we must backtrack a bit to December 1955. Ted and Fred had arranged to come north and stay with Larry Stark a few days during Christmas vacation of that year, and the highlight of the stay was visiting the EC offices on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the 28th, 29th and 30th.

For this historic occasion Fred lugged along his 25 pound tape recorder and Larry brought his camera. With the aid of the tape, Ted and Fred later wrote a serialized account of the visit titled "We're Off to EC." About the first half of the first visit is described in *Hoohah* # 4 (April-May 1956) and # 5 (August-September 1956). They never finished the series. Fred's column, "One Fan's Stream of Consciousness," was, however, a regular feature in *Hoohah*.

The fans from Washington got the VIP treatment at the EC offices because they were with # 1 EC fan Larry Stark. They talked with Gaines and Feldstein quite a while before the following exchange (from *Hoohah* # 5) occurred:

> About this time Bill realized that he did not know our names (except Larry, of course). We introduced ourselves, and Bill let out an enthusiastic cry: "You're Fred? Gee, you did a terrific job on the *Checklist*! Did you get any orders from the *Incredible* plug?" Fred





answered that about 130 orders (more now) had come in. Bill said that that wasn't bad, and Al chimed in with, "That's about as many copies (of *Incredible*) as we sold."

It wasn't reported in *Hoohah*, but a few minutes later Bill Gaines stunned Fred by handing him a five, or possibly a ten, dollar bill (and this, remember, was in the days of the penny postcard). This exchange followed:

FRED: ??!!

GAINES: That's a contribution to your project.

FRED: You already did by buying 16 copies.

GAINES: Well, that was 16, now this is a contribution. It was worth that to me to get one *Checklist*, believe me.

One important purpose of the visit to EC was to gather data for the pre-Trend checklist, and this was accomplished. With minor exceptions, Fred obtained complete pre-Trend data from EC's bound volumes of back issues during the visit.

Why, then, did this data not appear until August 1963? Well . . . The final bits of data had to be obtained. And then, real time as opposed to youthful fan time took over. Fred had become a movie theatre manager, going from city to city opening new theatres for a rather unusual chain that showed film classics. (Just how unusual this chain was is another story, one that Fred told in part in your chronicler's fanzine *Image* # 1, Spring 1960, and # 4, April-May 1961.)

Finally, however, after moving to New York to stay and becoming a freelance motion picture editor, Fred decided to clear up his unfinished fannish business. Since the *Checklist* had been out of print for some time, Fred redid the entire thing, correcting what errors he could and adding other new material in addition to the pre-Trend data.

That summer of 1963 I was staying with Fred (while finding a job and an apartment) and was amazed at the effort he was taking for a publication that had no apparent market. The last of EC and "satire" fandom had died, and the just beginning resurgence of comics interest had yet to develop any interest in EC.

The Full Edition of the Complete EC Checklist, as it was called, with a probable 200 copy run, remains the best of all the editions in my opinion, and the one I use as a reference tool. The titles are grouped together by subject and there is a very useful chronology chart in the back. Jack Davis did a cover especially for the book. There's new art by Williamson, Wood and Evans, capsule biographies of the EC staff, a reprint of Larry Stark's "Elegy" to EC from *Hoohah* # 6, and other features.

The EC staff found the *Mad* part of the *Checklist* so indispensable that Gaines commissioned Fred to produce a

TOP: It's the last week in the year of 1955, and Bill Gaines (seated behind the desk, if you didn't know) and Ted White (standing) are poring over bound books of pre-Trend ECs as Fred von Bernewitz takes down data for his projected pre-Trend checklist. On the wall behind them is a painting by Al Feldstein (later used as the cover of Squa Tront *# 3) and a nude by Jack Kamen. Note the prominent "No Smoking" sign. CENTER: Nancy Siegel relaxes in the EC offices. Marie Severin's caricatures of each of the EC staff, put up for the Christmas party, are still hanging on the wall. These are different from the ones that appeared in the 1972 Convention program book, which were done by Marie for another party. The latest EC's are in the rack. Among the books on the shelves are the first* Mad *paperbacks,* Seduction of the Innocent, Marquis de Sade, Public Speaking, Dark Carnival *and other books by Bradbury,* Outer Space, The Exploration of Space, *and* Sun, Moon and Stars. *BOTTOM: Larry Stark, engrossed in a volume of EC's, ignores Nancy Siegel. The paintings on the wall by Craig, Ingels and Davis have subsequently graced the covers of* Squa Tront *# 4, 5 and 8.*

This collaboration by Wood and Williamson, printed offset here for the first time, appeared in the 1963 and subsequent editions of the Checklist. *Because the* Checklist *already had Williamson art (a composite of several sketches), Fred did not identify Al's contribution to this drawing.*

Mad Checklist on an ongoing basis. The first issue covered *Mad* 1 through 64 and appeared in September 1961 (with a second printing on cheaper paper in February 1962). Issues 65-88 were covered in # 2, dated July 1964, which also had summary data for the entire run. The third issue, in July 1971, indexed issues 89-136; it was so bulky that it came in two parts.

All features were cross referenced by artist, writer and title, and reprints were referenced by original source. Sergio Aragones did an original cover for the third issue. All issues of *The Mad Checklist* were 8½ by 11 inches and mimeographed, with probable printruns of about 250 copies.

In 1970 Joe Vucenic obtained permission to put out a new edition of *The Complete EC Checklist*, which was published by Wade Brothers. Vucenic did a very professional job, using a format similar to Fred's last edition. It was mimeographed and completely retyped on new masters. Joe added a lot of additional data and features (perhaps more than were really needed), and corrected the mistakes that still remained in Fred's edition. He also added a few of his own, identifying *Panic* and *Piracy* as New Direction comics, and changing Larry Stark's spelling of the bard's name from "W. Shaxpy" to "W. Sharpy."

Vucenic brought out a new edition in 1974, with updated data on all EC reprints, and a special five page reprint of EC's first horror story, "Zombie Terror," from *Moon Girl* # 5. (In this edition, the immortal playwright came out "W. Shapy.")

Von Bernewitz and Vucenic have kept the *Checklist* more or less in print for 23 years now. It's hard to imagine what reading or studying the EC line would have been like without this indispensable reference work. —John Benson

We have now covered all the known comics fan publications that started publication while EC was still active—except for one. That, of course, is Hoohah, *Ron Parker's legendary fanzine that rose from a very humble beginning in November 1955 to become the best known—and the best—EC fanzine, counting Archie Goodwin, Ted White, Larry Stark, Larry Ivie, Fred von Bernewitz, Paul Davis and Bhob Stewart among its contributors.* Hoohah *requires extended coverage and is one of the few EC fanzines that could bear extensive reprinting. It is difficult to determine just how and in what form to tackle* Hoohah, *but we'll try.*

With and after Hoohah, *there was quite a bit of publishing activity in the late fifties, including Doug Brown's* Spoof, *Marty Pahls'* Fanfare *(no relation to the current publication of the same title), Mike Britt's* Squatront *(no relation to the current* Squa Tront*), Larry Ivie's* Concept, *Joel Moser's* Frantic, *Joe Pilati's* Smudge, *various publications from Gary Delain, and the strictly "satire" fanzines with contributions by some of today's top underground comics artists. Hopefully, someday these will also be covered in this series.*

Piracy. Unauthorized publication or use of a copyrighted or patented work.

Plagiarism. To take and pass off as one's own the ideas, writings, etc. of another.

Inspiration. Any stimulus of creative thought or action.

Swipe. To pilfer.

—Webster's New World Dictionary

Swipe. Research.

—Glossary, early mail order "How to Draw Comics" course

Actual piracy is a rather rare occurrence in today's publishing world, but EC nevertheless fell victim to the practice when the entire interior of *Incredible Science Fiction* # 30 was published with a new cover as *Strange Planets* # 1 by IW, who had obtained the plates for the book and didn't know or didn't care that publishing rights were not part of the sale.

One would have to call the example on this page a plagiarism. The actual use of the same story, the tracing of most panels in the same order, even the use of Joe Orlando's style, all goes substantially beyond what we think of as a swipe.

The war story on pages 12 and 13 strains the above mail order course definition of a swipe but ultimately falls within it. Here the artist has "researched" scenes from four separate sources to fit an entirely new story line.

On page 11 is an example of the kind of "inspiration" that Landon Chesney speaks of in this issue's letter page. Here an EC artist has utilized a classic illustration and, quite unlike the results of the war story swipe, the copy is not insulting to the original. This last page also points up a danger in spotting swipes. Someone ignorant of the Pyle drawing might accuse the Marvel artist of copying from the EC cover. Maybe he did, but more likely he went directly to Pyle for his source. —*jb*

Thanks to George A. Moonoogian, Haverhill, Mass. and Jack Bierley, Jersey Shore, Pa. for sending in swipes used this issue.

Below: The original is "Who's Next?" in Crime SuspenStories *# 16, April-May 1953. The copy is in* Kilabot Komiks Magasin *# 169, March 23, 1969.*

TONY WATCHED THE WHOLE THING WITH TEAR-FILLED EYES THROUGH A SIDE WINDOW BEHIND SOME SHRUBBERY. HE SAW ANNA GREET MR. BARKER...THROW HER ARMS ABOUT HIM...KISS HIM TENDERLY...
HE'S BUSY! WE'VE GOT A GOOD HOUR...
DARLING! HOLD ME... KISS ME...
HOW CLEVER OF MR. BARKER TO CHECK UP ON TONY... TO SEE THAT HE HAD PLENTY OF CUSTOMERS TO KEEP HIM BUSY... SO HE AND ANNA COULD BE TOGETHER... FREE FROM THE FEAR OF BEING INTERRUPTED! TONY WATCHED FOR A WHILE... THEN TURNED AWAY WHEN HE COULD STAND IT NO LONGER...
ANNA...SOB... ANNA!
THE NEXT DAY, TONY ENTERED THE BARBER SHOP...BUT HE DID NOT RAISE THE SHADE. HE WANTED NO CUSTOMERS THAT DAY. HE JUST WAITED...
FINALLY, MR. BARKER CAME OUT OF THE BANK. TONY LIFTED THE SHADE AND OPENED THE DOOR...
ER...MUCH OF A MAN, TONY? TONY?
THE DOOR SLAMMED BEHIND MR. BARKER! TONY STOOD THERE, GRIMNESS IN HIS HANDS, AN OPEN RAZOR POINTED AT THE BARBER CHAIR...
NO WAIT, MR. BARKER! YOU'RE NEXT...
MR. BARKER'S HYSTERICAL SHRIEKS OF PAIN DREW PEOPLE TO THE BARBERSHOP WINDOW! THEY GAZED IN HORROR AS TONY WIELDED HIS RAZOR...
GOOD LORD!
CHOKE...
HEE, HEE! AND SO, MR. BARKER'S ILLUSTRIOUS BANKING CAREER WAS SUDDENLY CUT SHORT...BY TONY'S STRAIGHT RAZOR. AS FOR ANNA...WELL, TONY'D TAKEN CARE OF HER FOR...THE MOMENT BEFORE...WHEN HE'D GOTTEN HOME. HE'D SLASHED HER THROAT...WITH AN AXE. WELL... THAT ABOUT WINDS UP ANOTHER SCREAM-SHACK IN THE MIDDLE OF NEAR. I'LL FEED YOU NEXT IN G.K.'S MAG, TALES FROM THE CRYPT! 'BYE, NOW! BUY E.C.
THE END

AT NABIGLA SI TONY SA KANIYANG NATUKLASAN...
ANALA KITA! MAYROON PA PALA KAYONG IBANG GAWA?
DARLING! TEKA SANDALI LANG!
TUMALIKOD SI TONY NA NASUGATAN ANG KALOOBAN SA PANINIWARI...
ANNA... (HIKBI) ANNA!
ANG SUMUNOD NA ARAW AY PUMASOK SI TONY SA BARBERYA. NAUMIT NIYO NIYA SINUKSAN. NAGHINTAY SIYA...
AT SI MR. BARKER AY LUMABAS MULA SA BANGKO. BINUKSAN NI TONY ANG PINTO...
SWERTE KO YATA NGAYON! TONY'S WALA KA PANG GUPIT?
BIGLANG DUMARA ANG PINTO. NAPATITIG SI SISTER BARKER KAY TONY NA MAY HAWAK NA LABABA...
KUNG KAILANGAN MAGHINTAY NGAYON, MR. BARKER!
NAGSIGAW SI MR. BARKER. KANG HIWAIN SYA NI TONY. NAGULUMIHANAN ANG MGA NAKASAKSI SA PANGYAYARI...
PAANO KO?
KACHI
MARKS

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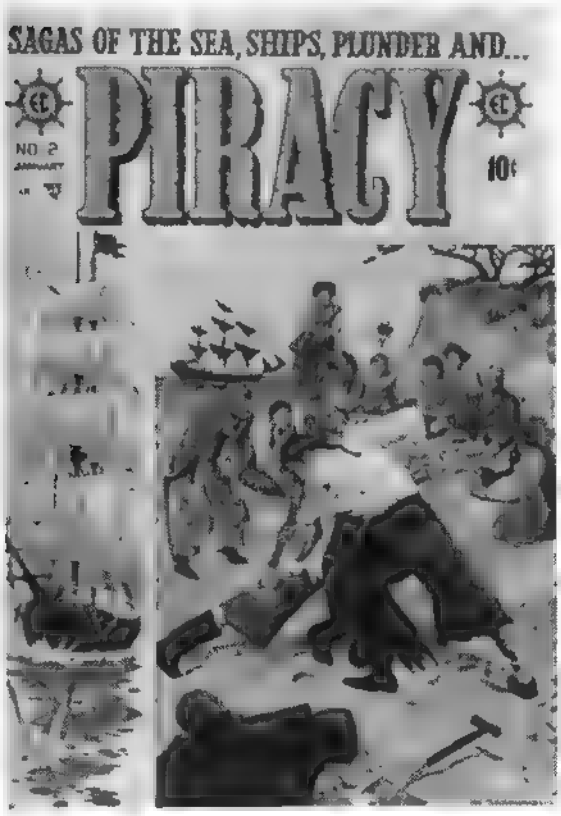
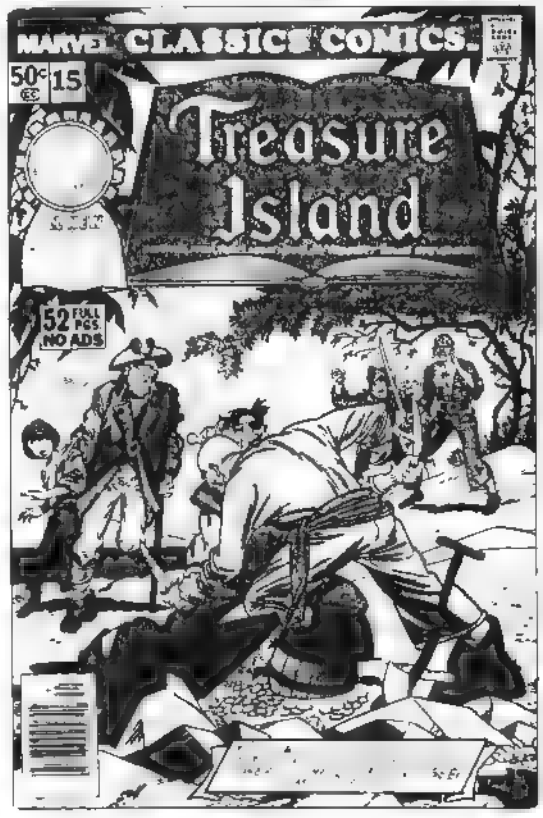
The original here is Howard Pyle's illustration "Which shall be captain?," 1911.





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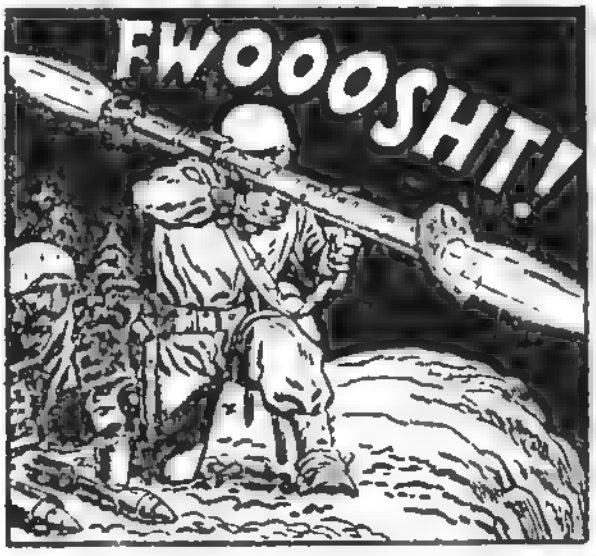
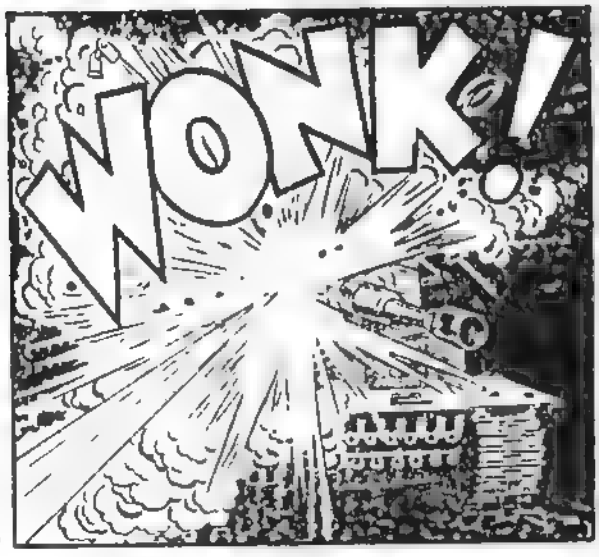
AND ON THE TAIL-END OF THE WEAPONS SQUAD A LIGHT BROWNING MACHINE GUN, .50 CAL., TWO OPERATORS, AND TWO AMMO. CARRIERS! AND THERE YOU HAVE IT...





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On this page panels from four EC stories have been clipped out and rearranged to correspond to the order they appear in the swipe. They're from "Luck," Two-Fisted Tales # 27, May-June 1952 (panels 1 and 7 above), "A Platoon," Frontline Combat # 6, May-June 1952 (panel 2 above), "Weak Link," Two-Fisted Tales # 24, November-December 1951 (panels 3, 4, 5 and 6 above) and "442nd Combat Team," Frontline Combat # 5, March April 1952 (panel 8 above) The swipe (next page) is from "The Paratrooper Boots," Battle Cry # 4, November 1952.

WHILE LATER THE YANKS WERE DUG IN... **AND READY...**

KELLY AND FERGIE... BETTER SET UP THAT MACHINE GUN DOWN THERE! NO SENSE IN LEAVING THAT FLANK OPEN!

OKAY, SARGE! COVER US, THOUGH!

THOUGHT YOU GUYS MIGHT NEED SOME HELP... WAS CONSIDERED AN EXPERT WITH A MACHINE GUN BY THE REST OF MY TROOPERS!

YEAH? WELL, ME AND FERGIE CAN TAKE CARE OF THIS GUN BY *OURSELVES!*

HEY, SARGE... TANK HEADED THIS WAY!

YEAH... HOW ABOUT ME GOIN' OUT AND GETTIN' IT!

NO... YOU STAY HERE WITH ME... THE BOYS'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO!

FFFWOOHSH!

LEMME GET IT, SARGE! THAT GUN'S GOT US PINNED DOWN HERE!

THE BOYS'LL GET IT... ***STAY PUT!*** NO SENSE IN EITHER OF US' GETTING KILLED!

WE DON'T FIGHT A WAR ***THIS*** WAY IN THE ***PARATROOPS***... SITTING ON OUR TAILS! I'M GOIN' OUT AND GET THAT GUN!

YOU DO AND IT'S AGAINST MY ORDERS!

'47 – '48

A ¾ SCORE

This sampling of drawings by Al Williamson provides a chance to trace the evolution and development of his style over a 15 year period, starting with the above sample page that Al did at age 15 or 16 to show to Fiction House and running beyond the EC period to illustrations done just a few years before his *Flash Gordon* series for King.

'50

'53 – '54

'58–'59

'63

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The EC Fan-Addict Convention held on Memorial Day Weekend 1972 was a unique event. Convention Chairmen Ron Barlow and Bruce Hershenson built the Convention around three panels that featured the largest assemblage of EC staff members ever to appear together in public. We're proud to present this special section featuring the transcripts of these panels in their virtual entirety.

THE TRANSCRIPTS: 1972 EC CONVENTION

Above: Bill Gaines, Al Feldstein, Jack Davis, Wally Wood, Marie Severin. All photographs by Fred von Bernewitz unless otherwise noted.

One P.M., Saturday, May 27, 1972

QUESTION: *From time to time at EC you redid the covers of the horror magazines. How did the public react to these changes?*

AL FELDSTEIN: There was one cover we had censored ourselves, if that's the one you're talking about—possibly two. So the public really wouldn't have reacted in any way because they wouldn't have known what the original was like. I'm not sure I know what you mean.

BILL GAINES: Let me help answer that question, because I think Al has forgotten. *[Laughter.]*

FELDSTEIN: Well, I've been working late. *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: There were many periods in our history when we were censored one way or another. We belonged to two different associations. There was a third period when we had to have an attorney censoring our material because of the trouble we got into with the wholesalers, which I'm not too clear on because the whole thing's kind of blurred together. But I believe the two covers that you may be referring to are the two that Ron Barlow has done uncensored versions of in poster form *[*Vault of Horror *# 32 and* Tales from the Crypt *# 38]*. And the reason the reader knew in those days that the covers had been changed is because we had run house ads, Al, of the uncensored versions. So we censored the covers at the

request of somebody. I think in that case it was at the request of this attorney.

The only self-censorship that we ever had was Marie Severin, who, as I think it says in your program booklet, was the only person we allowed to trample on our creative efforts. We all loved and respected Marie and so we listened to her, but no one else could control us without a cleaver. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *I'd like to ask a sort of related question. It seemed that in the horror comics you would have people outlandishly french fried and cut apart and so on, yet when you were dealing with a more ordinary kind of mayhem like stabbing or shooting, that tended to happen off to one side. Was there any policy behind that, or is that just the way it worked out?*

GAINES: Not to my recollection.

QUESTION *[reacts]: OK.*

GAINES: I didn't understand the question; he didn't understand my answer. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *Did you have any control over the script of the movie* Tales from the Crypt?

FELDSTEIN: No. Not as much as we should have.

GAINES: There were a lot of changes from our original concepts. There were a couple of changes that improved it. But they missed the point on a few things.

FELDSTEIN: They offered us the screenplay in final form to look at and we caught a lot of things that they slipped up on, or that they had not done right. And that helped a little. But as far as objections to any changes that they had already made in terms of plot—we had no right to do that.

QUESTION: *I'd like to ask Mr. Davis if he would work on horror comics again.*

JACK DAVIS *[deep Southern accent, as always]:* Well, I don't think there's a big demand for horror; maybe I haven't been keeping up with it, I don't know. I've been doing a lot of ads and stuff. But I enjoyed the horror bit.

QUESTION: *Did having worked on horror have an adverse effect on your role as a more public artist with the advertising?*

DAVIS: No. I don't know, I just started doing ads and doing the humor stuff with *Mad* and whatever, and I enjoyed doing that. But there was no calling for the horror stuff, for me any more.

GAINES: There was no call for horror for maybe ten years between the time we dropped it and the time Jim Warren really started bringing it back again with *Creepy* and *Eerie*. And in the interim Jack adapted to other fields, and certainly today we want him in *Mad* as much as we can get him.

FELDSTEIN: We don't get him enough.

GAINES: We don't get him enough. So as far as Jack is concerned I would say that drawing horror comics causes cancer. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *Were you satisfied with the movie* Tales from the Crypt?

GAINES: I thought it was a good movie and I thought it could have been a lot better. I wasn't satisfied, no. You'll see a showing of it today, and probably some of you will see some of the reasons that we thought it could have been better. But as a movie, as a complete entity, I thought it was a very fine job. These were professional movie makers and they did a great job photographically; the color, sound effects, the acting, the sets were all first rate.

FELDSTEIN: I'd like to add to that. I personally got a big kick out of the movie because I saw a lot of the things we had written come to life. I wasn't particularly intrigued with the bridging of the stories, that little gimmick, but this is a problem for a movie maker in terms of tying four separate stories together. We tied it together with a cover and some staples, but . . . *[Laughter.]* It was easy for us. But we were not responsible for that and we had let them have it, so I wouldn't criticize them.

QUESTION *[Roger Hill]: What's the story on the* Tales of Terror *annuals? Where were they distributed and what was the print run on them? Anything about them like that. I heard rumors that they were distributed on just the East Coast, or maybe just the West Coast.*

GAINES: That's a good question; a lot of people have wondered about that. We had three kinds of annuals: horror, science fiction, and war. In each case, what we did was to take four regular ten cent comics, ripped the covers off by hand *[laughter]* . . . not by *our* hands, but literally it was done by hand. It was not done by machinery, which made it very expensive. A new cover was printed and the four books were bound in this cover and we sold it for a quarter. And we thought, isn't that clever, because we've taken four magazines that would have been thrown away and bound them in a new cover, and we can sell it for a quarter so we make the money and the EC reader gets forty cents worth for a quarter. We did that until we realized that we were losing a couple of thousand dollars every time we did it. The hand removing of covers was just too expensive. We only did it with a relatively small number of copies. We only got complete returns from the East Coast area. And it's very possible they weren't distributed anywhere but on the East Coast; there weren't enough of them. I would guess there were 25,000 of each of those seven editions.

VOICE: *They were distributed in the Mid-west. I bought one of them.*

GAINES: Oh, then they did get out there.

FELDSTEIN: Another interesting aspect is that there were many that were not like others. We would take four science fiction magazines; one annual might have numbers 17, 18, 20, and 21 and another would have 21 through 24. You could get a copy of an annual and have something different in the next copy of the same annual. That ought to be fun for you collectors. *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: It already is fun for collectors, because Joe Vucenic, in the latest edition of *The EC Checklist*, Fred von Bernewitz's insanity—*[points]* there's von Bernewitz. This guy made that checklist, and if you ever read it you'll wonder how anybody in his right mind could have taken the time and trouble to do it; it's an unbelievable job. He has everything catalogued from every different angle: the writer, the artist, what issue . . .

FELDSTEIN: How long a brush lasted . . . *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: The latest [Vucenic] edition does have all the different kinds of annuals that have been discovered. Like, *Tales of Terror* # 1, maybe there's seven versions, version one has these four magazines, version two has these four *[laughs]*. The collector is a strange animal and will go to great lengths.

QUESTION: *Could you tell how the EC comics came to be associated with Ray Bradbury?*

GAINES: Yes, that's a very funny story. We were stealing Ray Bradbury stories. *[Laughter.]*

FELDSTEIN: *He* was! I was just writing from Bill's plots.

GAINES: That's true, *I* was stealing Ray Bradbury stories. And one day I stole two at the same time, and we put them together and made a better story out of them than either of them had been alone, we thought, and as a matter of fact Bradbury agreed. He wrote me a letter and said, "You have inadvertently omitted my royalty on these wonderful adaptations." So of course we immediately remitted his royalty and got permission to go on with it.

QUESTION: *I just wanted to congratulate you on doing stories on race and religion. You were the first comics to do that.*

GAINES: Yes, I think in these days that's called 'relevance.'

QUESTION: *Where did you get the ideas for them? And what was the reaction?*

FELDSTEIN: Being socially conscious is not relegated only to today's times. We came out of World War II, and we all had great hopes for the marvelous world of tomorrow. And when we started writing our comics, I guess one of the things that was in the back of our minds was to do a little proselytizing in terms of social conscience. So Bill and I would try to include, mainly in our science fiction, but I think we did it in the horror books too, what we called "preachy" stories—our own term for a story that had some sort of a plea to improve our social standards.

As far as the reaction was concerned, we never had any problems with them, and they were well received. And they did what we wanted them to do.

QUESTION: *I hear you had trouble with the government, with your story "Judgment Day" [*Weird Fantasy *# 18, reprinted in* Incredible Science Fiction *# 33]*

FELDSTEIN: No, that wasn't a government problem. The

problem was when we resubmitted "Judgment Day" when we were associated with the Comics Code to see whether we could get it past. I think we had another story turned down and we zinged them with this one. We *wanted* them to give us a good reason why they were turning it down, but they were smart enough not to. It was a straight plea for racial tolerance, orange and blue robots, and the only objection I understand they had was that they wanted us to remove the sweat from the Negro's temples and forehead in the last panel, which we refused to do.

GAINES: We never had any government interference at all with anything we have ever published, just for the record. That includes the FBI, the CIA—none of these people have ever bothered us. Not to disappoint any anarchists among you. I'm sorry, that happens to be the facts.

FELDSTEIN: Of course, our dossiers are about this thick. *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: One time we were bothered by the Secret Service when it was discovered that a three dollar bill we had published was given change in a Texas airport. *[Laughter.]* And they made us stop it.

FELDSTEIN: There was one other thing. We had a visit from the FBI when we published a game called "Draft Dodger," and it said that when you reach the final square, you send your name to J. Edgar Hoover, may he rest in peace, and he would send you an authorized *bona fide* Draft Dodger card. And these two stalwart, blond, handsome out-of-the-comic-book type men came and said, "We're from the FBI. Please do not do this any more, because Mr. Hoover doesn't like to receive this type of material. *[Laughter.]* So when we published it in an annual I think we changed it.

QUESTION: *I would like to ask Mrs. Severin . . .*

GAINES: *Miss* Severin. This is Johnny's sister.

QUESTION: *How did you meet the deadlines with all the color separations?*

MARIE SEVERIN: Painfully. No, Bill and Al had very good deadlines, so I never really had to do anything that fast.

GAINES: Marie, tell the truth. How did you get those overnight 32 page books colored?

SEVERIN: My brother helped me. *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: The real truth! You've forgotten. I used to give you dexedrine pills *[laughs]*. I was on a diet in those days, as I always am, and as a result I was taking dexedrine and the side effect of dexedrine is to keep you awake. So Marie, when she really got in a hole, would borrow a dexedrine.

QUESTION: *Mr. Davis, this is directed to you because you handled the Crypt Keeper stories. Getting back to the movie, what is your opinion of the Ralph Richardson version without makeup?*

DAVIS: Well, I'm embarrassed. I missed every showing of the movie. *[Laughter.]* But I'd really hate to go to see it. I picture the Crypt Keeper a certain way, and from the pictures I've seen I'm a little disappointed.

GAINES: Of course, that really wasn't the Crypt Keeper. That was kind of something . . . We insisted that they have a Crypt Keeper. It was originally going to be the Devil; at least we talked them out of that. *[Laughter.]* But it wasn't the Crypt Keeper in any sense of the way we know the Crypt Keeper

QUESTION: *Mr. Davis, how did you feel about drawing all that gruesome horror?*

DAVIS: Well, I really . . . no, I really felt bad about it. *[Laughter.]* When I first came to New York, I went around to all the comic book publishers and I was turned down so many times, and then I was accepted at EC by Al, and I got some work right away. And I enjoyed doing the horror bit and they liked it, and so I kept at it. But when I looked back on it after things began to get very ticklish with the Code and everything, I began to ask—am I doing something constructive or good. I still, I don't know, I don't think it's really that bad.

GAINES: You have to understand Jack comes from another era, and another kind of background. Jack was, and still is, a very moral, religious person. He came up here from Georgia . . . *[laughter]* . . . I'm serious now . . . and Jack did this stuff because it was his job as an artist. Jack has always had some misgivings about it, and I respect his misgivings. Jack has been more comfortable with other types of material than horror. But the fact that he's a real pro is evident from the fact that although he wasn't 100% comfortable with it, you see the job he did.

DAVIS: There was a lot of talent down there, and it was great to be associated with them. It was one big team and I enjoyed it.

FELDSTEIN: I'd like to make an observation on what Jack referred to. I think we all went through it, everyone associated with the EC organization, and I think Bill, too, would have to admit it. When we were doing the stuff we were enjoying it, because we knew we were having fun with a tongue-in-cheek type of entertainment. When Senator Kefauver started the crime investigations, the "experts," in quotes, gave all kinds of supportive testimony how terrible we were, and what we were doing to the youth of America. We became intimidated, and I'm sure that we all did some soul-searching. In retrospect now, with all of you young people looking at this stuff and saying how great it was, we've come full circle. But the interesting thing is that at that time we were intimidated, and that's a frightening thing to happen and a frightening thing that it could have happened. And let's all hope that it *never* happens again.

QUESTION: *Mr. Feldstein, you mentioned that you were having fun. Did you intentionally set out to create a high quality art product, or was it just the result of the free spirit?*

FELDSTEIN: Well, there were two things we were doing. First of all, we intentionally set out to do comic books that would make money. That was the first thing. Secondly, in terms of the horror, and I think you have to take each of them separately, we intended to put out horror comics that would be scary and entertaining. I remember back when I was young, listening to *The Witch's Tale* on the radio, Arch Obler's *Lights Out*, and the squeaking door . . . *Inner Sanctum*. Bill and I talked about it when I first became associated with him, and we decided we were going to put out something like that in comics. So we set out to do it, and we did the best we could. We never underestimated our audience and we always wrote to *our* level. If we thought the comics were being read by very young children, we were not particularly concerned with writing to their level. You have to remember that this was an era when television was at its infancy, and the visual media was either motion pictures or comics. Television, of course, has supplanted the comics. So we were writing in a visual medium and we did the best we could with the level we felt we could reach. We were writing for teenagers and young adults; we were writing for the guys that were reading it in the Army. We were writing for ourselves at our age level, and I think perhaps that was responsible for the level we reached.

GAINES: Of course, as we accumulated a fine staff of artists, they started competing among themselves, not in any

Photo: Roger Hill

Ron Barlow and Bruce Hershenson, chairmen of the EC Fan-Addict Convention.

nasty way, but each one of them was so inspired by what the others were doing that they started doing better work. If two artists would be delivering their jobs to the EC offices at the same moment, what you would have is two guys fainting over the other's work. Literally. If Davis and Wood got there together . . .

FELDSTEIN: "Holy cow!" "Bad scene!" *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: This still goes on at the *Mad* office, but in those days it was kind of unique. It was part of the general pride of being part of a group. I think everyone ended up drawing for the other nine guys. Because everyone wanted to bring in something that was so good that it would make the other nine artists faint. They all kept doing this for five years.

QUESTION: *All three of your horror titles underwent either a title or a format change after three issues. Were you considering dropping horror at that time?*

GAINES: Well, let's go back. The first horror book was *The Crypt of Terror*, and after three issues we changed it to *Tales from the Crypt*. As I recall, the reason we changed it was because we had immediately run into wholesaler problems, and we saw that if we took "Terror" out of the title it would alleviate the situation. We were in the process of changing *The Vault of Horror* to something when all of a sudden *The Crypt of Terror*, the last one, started selling. But *Tales from the Crypt* turned out to be a very wonderful title; it never was outsold by *The Vault of Horror* anyway.

As some of you might know, when we decided to add a fourth horror book we called it *The Crypt of Terror*. And just before the first issue was published we decided to drop horror. So we knocked off the title, and the last issue of *Tales from the Crypt* had a black and white masthead which was stuck on at the last minute where the original color *Crypt of Terror* masthead had been. So if you read the inside of the last issue of *Tales from the Crypt*, it says that it's the fourth horror book, called *The Crypt of Terror*.

QUESTION: *Do you think you could, and would you want to, do the whole mess over again?*

GAINES: You mean starting now? *[Laughter.]* I just turned fifty, and the answer is no. If I were 25 again, yes.

FELDSTEIN: I would enjoy doing it over again, maybe doing it differently.

QUESTION: *Differently how?*

FELDSTEIN: I think the level today would have to be even higher than it was in those days. I think the unfortunate thing is that it *can't* be done. The saddest thing that has happened to the comic book as an art form is the Code. I think it relegated the comic book to a substandard level and it's still strapping and inhibiting it. So whether I want to do it over or not, we couldn't do it today.

QUESTION: *How about a magazine format?*

GAINES: It's constantly under consideration, but thus far we have felt that it wasn't feasible. If you tried to publish a standard four color horror comic today it wouldn't get through the Code, and if you tried to do it without the Code in normal format the wholesalers would kick it back at you and it wouldn't get on sale. So one way or another you've got a disaster on your hands. Now you can go the Warren route, which goes out for 75¢ is it now?, in black and white. That's one way. I don't know that Warren's books are doing all that well. I don't know how they're doing lately, but I never heard that they're great money makers.

QUESTION: *Are you saying that we're stuck with the code?*

GAINES: Well at the moment you damn well are. You've been stuck with it for twenty years.

QUESTION: *But do you see that for the future?*

GAINES: Well, the country has been going in a more and more liberal and uninhibited direction, and unless the pendulum starts swinging the other direction which it very well may because historically it always has, perhaps the time will come when you could put out a horror comic for a 14 year old child and no one will care, but I don't think the time is today.

FELDSTEIN: I might point out that as a result of the investigations there are laws on the books in the state of New York that you can't publish a comic with the words "terror" or "horror" or "weird" or a few other things on the cover.

GAINES: I don't think we should mention this outside of this room because they may have forgotten, but there is a law on the books in New York prohibiting crime and horror comics period.

FELDSTEIN: It's unconstitutional.

GAINES: But someone's going to have to go to jail to prove it.

QUESTION: *How about a rating code like the movies have?*

FELDSTEIN: It's an interesting idea and they should have done that 20 years ago. I think it's a great idea.

GAINES: There's one thing wrong with that, though, I think, and that is that basically comics are read by children. Although there are a lot of adults who read comics, I don't think there are enough to support a magazine which, may I remind you, must print a quarter of a million copies minimum.

QUESTION: *Which is more satisfying to you—I'm not talking about dollars, I'm talking about rewarding to you personally—the EC comic days, or* Mad?

GAINES: Well, each one of us has to answer separately. To me, the EC days were more rewarding.

FELDSTEIN: As far as I'm concerned, what I'm doing today with *Mad*. And you have to go back to that question of social conscience. I think I'm doing more with *Mad* in that area than was ever done with the horror comics. I think the horror comics were great entertainment, and I enjoyed doing them as entertainment. I get a kind of a satisfaction out of *Mad* that goes beyond just the satisfaction of doing something entertaining. I get a kind of moral satisfaction too. That sounds like my conscience, but I enjoy that for what it is.

QUESTION: *What were the sales figures like for the horror comics?*

GAINES: I'll precede this with something that you must know businesswise. At the time we were publishing, for a variety of reasons, we were with the worst, the weakest and the least well thought of distributor among all the national distributors, which was Leader News. They subsequently went bankrupt and are no longer in existence. The distribution system works like this—I don't want to bore you with this, but it's important—there are maybe six to ten distributors who handle all the magazines. Now they take these magazines and distribute them in turn to some 700 local wholesalers, and these 700 wholesalers in turn distribute the magazines to about 100,000 newsdealers and stores, who in turn sell it to you. Now, Leader was one of those ten distributors. And the wholesaler's respect for a distributor was a large factor in how well he would handle a distributor's books. Since we were with the weakest distributor, we got the weakest distribution. Also, because we were with this weak distributor we had to sell our books for a quarter of a cent less than anyone else in the business. Where everyone else was getting five and a quarter cents for a ten cent comic, we were getting only a nickle. Now that quarter of a cent doesn't sound like much, but it's an awful lot. Sometimes it's the margin between making a profit and having a loss. So with these two facts in mind, our figures were never that high. The most we ever sold of a horror comic I think was about 400,000. Now for a comic in those days, that was low. Today it would be tremendous, but those were the days of *Superman* selling two and three million copies an issue, *Crime Does Not Pay* selling up to four million copies an issue. Those were some of the leaders. The most we ever sold was about a half a million. And yet we built our reputation and had our fans despite this very bad distribution set up. There are parts of the country that probably never saw an EC book and probably to this day the people that live there have never heard of them. We just didn't get full national distribution.

QUESTION: *How successful were the Picto-Fictions?*

GAINES: It was a disaster! After we dropped all our New Trend books and went into the New Direction books, *that* was a disaster, I mean *really* a disaster. Then we got out of that and into Picto-Fiction, which was a bigger disaster, but it didn't last as long because we ran out of money. And then we just stopped.

FELDSTEIN: I really wonder whether the Picto-Fiction ever got a fair chance, Bill. I mean, we were with the weakest distributor, they were in terrible trouble financially, and we know that they weren't really distributed well.

GAINES: No. But they were selling like 15 to 20 percent.

FELDSTEIN: We don't know whether they were good or they weren't. We don't know whether they would have done anything if they'd been given the chance.

QUESTION: *What's the story on* Shock Illustrated *# 3?*

GAINES: When Leader News went bankrupt in 1956, I was wiped out and about a hundred grand in the red. But *Shock # 3* had been printed in an amount of about 200 to 250,000 copies. The insides had been printed and the covers had been printed; all it required was the binding money. I didn't have binding money. I couldn't even raise the few grand to bind it, and they were selling so badly I figured even if I bound it and sent it out we wouldn't sell anyway. So we chopped up and threw away 200,000 odd copies of *Shock # 3, except for* one to 200 copies which I had hand bound. I recall 100; some people say there were 200. They laid around the office in big piles, and anybody came in and grabbed a few, and they were gone and who gave it a thought. And now of course it's become the super super EC collectors item, because in the whole world there could be no more than 200 of them.

QUESTION: *I heard that during the fifties the other companies were copying from you. Did you get any ideas from them?*

GAINES: I think Al pointed out in the interview we had with *The Monster Times* that until 1950 we were copying them. The EC books were very mediocre down to poor; crime

Photo: Roger Hill

Russ Cochran, publisher of the EC Portfolios *and the new complete hardbounds, in the dealers' room.*

books, westerns, love books . . . Here's Wally Wood! *[Wood enters room to prolonged enthusiastic applause.]* Wow! That was so exciting I forgot what we were talking about. *[Laughter.]* Oh yes, the exciting love books. One thing funny about the love books I'll just throw in; if any of you have them, you might have seen the love-lorn columns. In *Modern Love* it was "Advice from Amy." In *A Moon, A Girl, Romance* it was "Advice from Adrian." You want to know who Adrian and Amy were? Us. *[Laughter.]*

WALLY WOOD *[sotto voice, as always]:* I don't know. I thought there were a *lot* of funny things in those books.

GAINES: I can see the panel is going to liven up. But before that, what were we into?

FELDSTEIN: You were saying that we decided at one point that we were no longer going to follow, but we were going to go out on our own and let them follow us if we hit it right.

GAINES: Since 1950 we started all the trends of the stuff we've been in. We haven't copied anybody.

QUESTION: *Who was the first on your staff to do horror stories?*

GAINES: Al. He wrote it and he drew it.

FELDSTEIN: It was called "The Crypt of Terror" and it was in *War Against Crime* or *Crime Patrol . . . [prompted by audience] Crime Patrol # 15*, thank you. I also did the first "Vault of Horror" which, if "Terror" was in *Crime Patrol*, was in *War Against Crime [# 10]*.

QUESTION: *What about Johnny Craig?*

FELDSTEIN: Johnny took over "The Vault of Horror" when we made it its own magazine. I did "The Crypt of Terror" until Jack took over.

GAINES: Of course you know who did "The Haunt of Fear" and the Old Witch.

QUESTION: *Where is he?*

GAINES: Graham Ingels kind of dropped out of things and disappeared about ten years ago. We didn't even know if he was alive until fairly recently, and we discovered to our delight . . . I forget who discovered it, one of the fanzine-type people dug around and found out that Graham was in Florida. He doesn't want it known where he is in Florida, and *I* don't know where he is in Florida. But I'll tell you that I did talk to him twice by telephone. And the way I get in touch with him is, I call an attorney in Florida and the attorney calls Graham and Graham calls me collect. *[Laughter.]* He won't tell me what he's doing, and he won't tell me where he is, and all he says is that he's very happy.

FELDSTEIN: I think he's an undertaker. *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: Actually Graham has kind of dropped out, and if that's the way he wants it, so be it.

QUESTION: *I'm interested in the matter of personal artistic taste. I wonder what types of comic stories you each felt most comfortable with.*

DAVIS: I like to do athletic stuff, sports, the outdoor stuff, cowboys. I'm not an illustrator. It goes back to the question, which do I like better, the horror or *Mad*. I think the horror books were more illustrative, and I enjoy doing the funny books, and that's why I enjoy *Mad* better.

QUESTION: *The reason I asked is because I know several illustrators who were heavily inspired by your war comics, especially the Civil War.*

DAVIS: I enjoyed doing that, but I don't think I did it as good as what I do for *Mad*.

GAINES: You could well wish that you had a penny for every artist that has been inspired by Jack Davis.

WOOD: I like the funny stuff, 'cause it's less effort, you know. *[Laughter.]*

SEVERIN: I didn't draw at EC. Coloringwise, I think I had more fun with the science fiction, just because it was science fiction. But in a lot of the horror books you could really go wild with the mood. Also, a nice thing about EC is that they had so many different styles that a book was interesting, not 20 pages of one story. You would have someone like Wood, who would drive you crazy, absolutely terrible, but it was so rewarding what came out, it was great.

GAINES: If Marie didn't like something she would just paint it dark blue and nobody could ever see it. *[Laughter.]*

SEVERIN: I really only censored *Shock*, that was the only one.

FELDSTEIN: I want to answer this question from my point of view. I got into the comic book business having never read a comic book. I found out from a friend at the High School of Music and Art that you could make 30 dollars a page drawing comic books. So I got a job and developed a style of my own which was *terrible*; well, *I* thought so. But one thing I did learn after I got into the industry was that there was too much of the same kind of thing going on. This was something I always insisted upon, and that's why when Jack Davis walked into my office—and I didn't know he'd

been turned down all over the place, I just heard about it now *[laughter]*—I said, "That's a great style, and *don't change it.*" And that was what happened with everybody in the EC organization. Everybody worked their own style. I never felt anybody should work any differently from what was most comfortable for them. That's where Marie gets her kicks from in terms of saying that every artist did his different style and everything looked different. That's why "Ghastly" Graham Ingels was able to blossom, because his style was such that it lent itself to the horror comics. And I know that he had experience drawing for other people where he had to kind of try to draw what the rest of the field was doing at the time.

QUESTION: *How come Marie Severin didn't draw for EC?*

GAINES: Marie has always had a cartoony style, or at least she did then, and as you can see from the program book she was a damn good cartoonist. But in those days we weren't really turning out cartoon type books. *Mad* did come along, but by that time we weren't letting her out of the coloring closet for anything.

QUESTION: *I'd like to ask each of you separately; which did you prefer, the science fiction or the horror magazines?*

GAINES: Of course Al and I always preferred the science fiction. We always said we were proudest of the science fiction, and we still do.

FELDSTEIN: From my own personal point of view of writing, I felt the science fiction allowed me to do a little more creative writing, sometimes at the expense of the space left for the artist to draw in. Right, Wally?

WOOD: We developed short fingers because of that. *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: The classic story I like to tell about that is when Al had a balloon that was so big that there was hardly any space left for Graham to draw the Old Witch in. So when Graham brought back the story, there's the Old Witch, holding up the balloon like this.

QUESTION: *When you spoke of encouraging the artists, what is your feeling now that they're so well known and admired?*

GAINES: Pride.

DAVIS: There's something that I've learned. At one period after the horror bit I started walking the streets looking for work, and I was going around to these advertising agencies. And most of the art directors were these young guys who were *Mad* fans or EC fans and I got a lot of work from those guys, and I appreciated it.

WOOD: Yeah, me too, you know. But you had to wait for them to grow up to get the jobs. *[Laughter.]*

FELDSTEIN: I'll give you another example of this kind of experience. When I took over *Mad* in 1956 we started to do movie satires. I would try to get research stills from the movie companies, and we were blackballed all over the place. The opinion at that time was that you don't make fun of any product. Today we have absolutely no problem. Because all the kids that read *Mad* then are now handing out publicity for these motion picture companies, and they're very cooperative.

But in answer to the question, I have one observation, and it's an observation of sadness. It's interesting that the EC comics have inspired you young people to take up art, and it's very sad that there's no market in which you can use your talent, if you have it. It is a sad thing that the comic industry has shrunk to the size it has, whether it is due to the competition of television or the limitations of the Code and therefore the limiting of the market. It's too bad that the Warren-type comics aren't doing well. By that I mean well enough that there would be six or eight companies.

GAINES: The underground comics, we understand, have a very small circulation of around 20,000. I don't know how a comic with a sale of 20,000 could survive. Of course, they sell for 50¢ or a buck and that does make a difference. I don't know what they pay the artists.

WOOD: Bill, I'm doing a story for the underground press. And it's not bad. It pays better than Charlton. *[Much laughter.]*

FELDSTEIN: I really feel that the comic book still is an excellent entertainment medium. I think if it were done today without the restrictions, that it could become a big industry again. I think the restrictions that are on it are what's hurting it as an industry.

QUESTION: *But aren't the underground comics unrestricted?*

FELDSTEIN: Yes, but do you know the education that would have to go on all the way up the line through the distributors, the wholesalers and the retailers to get this thing going again? Because the stigma has lasted for 20 years. But I wish the undergrounds luck, I really do.

GAINES: This strange looking little man over here.

QUESTION: *Marie, if Bill Gaines starts doing horror comics again, would you be his colorer again?*

SEVERIN: Well, Mr. Gaines hasn't yet. Let's see what happens. I wouldn't mind coloring the horror again. They were a lot of fun.

FELDSTEIN: Marie, be careful. There'd be no horror this time, it'll be sexy.

GAINES: Incidentally, that strange looking little man over there is my son.

QUESTION: *What do you feel when you see your 10¢ artwork selling for $150?*

FELDSTEIN: I wish I had gotten paid that much!

DAVIS: I wish I'd saved some. *[Laughter.]* I think I burned a whole flock of it.

FELDSTEIN: He started book burning before the government did!

QUESTION: *What do you think of* The National Lampoon?

GAINES: What's that? *[Laughter.]* It's a good effort.

QUESTION: *What did you think of their* Mad *parody [in issue # 19]?*

GAINES: Pretty funny. In parts it was very funny.

QUESTION: The National Lampoon *brought out a piece on* Mad; *what did you think of it? [Incredulous snickers.]*

GAINES: I didn't like that article at all. *[Much laughter, applause.]*

FELDSTEIN: Could I say something about *The National Lampoon*? I wish I had their package to play with—the color. We're working our way and they're working their way, but I think their package is great. I don't know if I agree with what they do.

GAINES: George Evans! *[Evans enters room to extended applause.]*

FELDSTEIN: George has got his spad double parked.

QUESTION: *Mr. Evans, it seems that you did the goriest stories, with dismembered bodies and so forth. Did they give you those especially?*

GEORGE EVANS: One look at me and that's all they could do. *[Laughter.]* I don't think so.

FELDSTEIN: You're wrong. We did give George stories that were gory in their conception. His work was so straight and clean that the atmosphere that he presented was not gothic, so we gave him the stories that were shocking in the gothic concept. So that he was the one who did the pigeons that ate up the pieces of the body *[probably "Curiosity Killed . . ." in* Tales from the Crypt *# 36]*, and things like that, because he drew such pretty pigeons. The horror was in the writing, really. That went for George and Jack Kamen, who also did that kind of straight illustrative job. We didn't have any trouble with Ghastly. Ghastly could do a graveyard, and even if nothing was happening it was horrible. And Jack Davis had kind of a hairy, you know, ratty looking . . . *[laughter]* style. We didn't have any trouble writing horror stories for him. Johnny Craig, of course, did his own, and he went along with the same kind of shock horror which was more of a concept in the writing than in the actual pictures.

EVANS: If I could just add to that. We talked it over before I even started to work for EC. And they decided, talking with me and seeing the things I had, as Al explained, that you could do all of this build-up and sneak up to that gory smash ending. And that seemed to fit.

QUESTION: *Why didn't Evans do more than one s-f story?*

EVANS: I was probably the slowest worker they had up there.

GAINES: We probably kept him busy on other things. We categorized our artists, and when we got them into their slot we kept them there. George was very good on horror and war.

QUESTION: *I'm curious about the collaboration between*

the artist and the writer. Did you rough out the story and then leave the artist to his own devices in illustrating it?

FELDSTEIN: There were three steps. The first step was the plotting, which Bill and I did. Then there was the writing, and the writing was done in a very strange and unorthodox way. This came out of my experiences in the early days of comics as a freelancer. I would get from some supposed writer for comics a script that would tell me that I had to draw a guy driving in a car while in an airplane overhead was a girl tied up and he was talking on the telephone, or whatever, in the car—this kind of impossible situation in terms of illustrations. So when I was writing the stories that Bill and I plotted, I would take into consideration how they would be illustrated, and break them down and write them directly on the illustration board. There was never a script. If you went back to the EC vaults to look for the scripts for all those stories, they don't exist. They were written directly on the illustration board. Then they were lettered, so that there was no problem with an artist taking a script and drawing a panel and sending it to a letterer and finding that his artwork had been overrun with lettering. At that point the artist picked up the story. And all he got from us was the rudimentary basic action that was going on. I was not particularly interested in anything else but explaining to him, if he didn't already know from reading it—it was pretty obvious, when those captions got more lengthy—what was going on. And I let them take it from there. I felt Bill and I made the recipe and we cooked up the cake and there it was, and these guys could decorate it any way they wanted. And I think they were able to creatively augment what we'd done in terms of the story.

QUESTION: *Did they ever bring in something that you thought should be changed?*

FELDSTEIN: Rarely; there were very few changes. Only if they'd missed an essential point.

QUESTION: *You said you wrote the scripts directly on the illustration board. In your books you didn't have hand lettering. How was it done?*

FELDSTEIN: Well, it was machine lettering, but it was the same problem. I lettered the captions and the balloons by hand in kind of scratchy capital letters and then it was turned over to the letterer, who would, over my lettering . . .

GAINES: Excuse me, but Al actually wrote these things two lines below where the lettering was to go. The letterer had to be able to read what he was lettering.

FELDSTEIN: I'd forgotten that. I remember now; we had illustration board that was printed with lettering lines in very light blue, and when I'd lay out the panels I'd count down two lines and start writing on the third line. You're getting into technical areas here. I don't know if you're interested.

GAINES: This reminds me of a story about Al Williamson. I hadn't seen Al for maybe five years, and we met one day and had dinner somewhere, spent a pleasant evening talking and catching up, and we ended up in my apartment and had a few beers. And I walked him down to the subway, and as he walked down the stairs I waved goodbye, and ten years passed. And I see Al, and I say, "Al, I want you to tell me everything that happened since I saw you last." And he said, "Well, when I went down into the subway . . ." *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *How did the artists like being boxed into the little panels that were set up for them so they couldn't change the layout or the design of the panel?*

EVANS: I'll give you Reed Crandall's answer one time. He said he felt like he was designing a postage stamp every damn time he had one of those little panels to work in. But he did a good job I think, don't you?

DAVIS: Well, it meant just a little less working time.

GAINES: Jack worked by the square yard. A little panel like this would take a lot less time than a big panel.

WOOD: It did and it didn't. You know, sometimes it didn't bother me at all; other times I wished I could have expanded some things.

QUESTION: *Were there any special problems in adapting the Bradbury stories, both in the story and for the artists?*

FELDSTEIN: The difficulty with the Bradbury things was, being an artist and being cognizant of what the artist was going to have to face when he got the artwork, I tried to break the stories down so that they would come to a point in each panel that would present a picture for these guys to draw. This was a difficult problem with Bradbury. He's very flowery and very wordy, and he moves slowly, very slowly, sometimes nowhere at all. It was difficult. I think it's a credit to the artists that they were able to dredge up as much interesting illustrations as they did. Wally did "There Will Come Soft Rains" *[Weird Fantasy # 17]* and stuff like that was so tough to break down and illustrate. But the thing that was controlling me was the respect for Bradbury's style. I wanted to get it all in, all I could. So it was a question of trying to mix the two problems together and coming out as best I could. Sometimes it got a

Bill Gaines, Al Feldstein, Jack Davis, Marie Severin.

little wordy. But from Bradbury's point of view he was very pleased, because I think we captured his stories. When he got to a point of description where the artist could take it over and do it for him, that's where I stopped in a particular panel.

WOOD: I'd like to go back and talk about the system of lettering the pages first. I think this had a lot to do with why the stuff was as good as it was. When we got those pages, lettered and all, all we had to do was go home and draw, and not worry about a thing. We didn't have to show pencils, we brought in the finished product, and we could do just about anything we wanted to do.

FELDSTEIN: Cool it, Wally. *You* didn't have to show pencils. A lot of the artists showed pencils. *[Laughter.]*

WOOD: There was one other thing. You hand Bill a job and he would hand you a check. And it still goes.

EVANS: The man asked about adapting these things and doing the writing. I asked Al pretty much the same thing, because, as you probably know, most of us have an interest in the writing end of it. I sat while Al was finishing a story that I had come in to pick up, and he didn't have a single scrap of reference of any sort in front of him. He was just lettering steadily from panel to panel, putting balloons in, and he came out right exactly on the end panel. I said, "Al, how do you do it?" He said, "I'm not saying a word; that's the secret of it all." And he did it on every script that he worked with; it came out even without a note so far as I ever saw.

WOOD: Some of them had 12 panels on the last page. *[Laughter.]*

FELDSTEIN: He just said the word.

GAINES: As a matter of fact, Wally, that's not true.

WOOD: No, I know it.

GAINES: Nobody ever knew how he did it. I don't think Al knows how he did it.

QUESTION: *I was wondering, Mr. Feldstein, how you felt about the work of Bernie Krigstein, particularly on "Master Race" [Impact # 1]. You were talking a while ago about how you had broken things down. When he cut up the pages of "Master Race," did you feel that he was right or that you were right?*

FELDSTEIN: He was right. I think that Bernie Krigstein was shining a light for us to follow, in terms of where the comic book could go. It's too bad the door was slammed on it.

At one P.M. on Monday, May 29, 1972, a "Surprise Panel" was scheduled, which wasn't transcribed for this special section because very little of the discussion was about EC. The panel had no stated subject and was too large to have any focus. The panelists were: (shown here) Simon Deitch, Larry Ivie, Bruce Jones, E. Nelson Bridwell, Bill Gaines, Bhob Stewart (partially obscured), Art Spiegelman, and (not pictured) Frank Brunner and Kenneth Smith. Among the other events at the Convention were several showings of the then new film Tales from the Crypt, *a showing of Harvey Kurtzman's home movies of the EC staff, and other EC related film clips. A sizable collection of EC art was also on display.*

But Bernie Krigstein was a pioneer, just the same as we were earlier pioneers in lifting the level of writing and illustration and allowing the guys to do their own styles. We explored a trail; Bernie Krigstein came in and showed us a further trail to go, and I probably, if we had continued, would have adapted my system of working to Bernie Krigstein's ideas. It probably would have resulted in a reexamination of what we were doing at the time in terms of limitations on the artists. But I think that he was a talented man, and what he did with "Master Race," increasing it from a six-pager to an 8-pager and causing all kinds of hell in our schedule at the time, improved the product. We couldn't have had that anarchy all the time, but there would have had to have been some sort of a new system to work with.

QUESTION *[John Benson]: Your comics were known for having more text than the average comic. I'd like to know what led you to go in that direction, and whether you feel in retrospect that that was the proper direction for those books to have taken.*

FELDSTEIN: I wrote the stories the way I thought they should be told, and I really had no scientific or philosophical approach. I know that they were wordy, and yet it gave the magazine reading time that was greater than the ordinary comic book. This might have given more value for your money. I really couldn't answer your question. It was all like the old pilots who used to fly by the seat of their pants. That's the way we did our stuff, and that's the way I continued to do things throughout my career. I do it the way I feel it.

QUESTION *[Benson]: But your earlier comics had much less text than the later ones.*

FELDSTEIN: Yes, but the earlier comics were designed to follow standards that were set in the comic industry, which we decided to break away from.

GAINES: This is getting into almost a philosophical discussion on the problem, but perhaps we shouldn't have been comic magazines. Perhaps we should have been profusely illustrated text magazines of some sort. But we were comic publishers and our business was comics and to tell the kind of stories that we wanted to tell, and to tell as many stories as we wanted to tell, and to tell them as beautifully as they were told, required a lot of words. And so therefore they ended up a little crampy on the pictures, and yet they got the effect that was desired.

QUESTION: *Will* Mad *do a parody of* Tales from the Crypt?

GAINES: It wasn't that good a picture. No, really. We . . .

FELDSTEIN: We thought about it, we laughed about it. I've been watching the grosses very carefully. One of the things that *Mad* does is to make sure that we do a picture that a large group of our readership will have seen. And it hasn't made that much money. I think it's going to be a success in terms of the amount of money that it cost as opposed to what they'll get. But I don't think it was a big enough picture for me to do in terms of selling *Mad* magazine. I'd rather do *The Godfather.*

QUESTION: Tales from the Crypt *seemed to be advertised very heavily.*

GAINES: The story of *Tales from the Crypt* is as follows. One of the leading people in a company called Amicus Productions happened to be an old EC reader, and that's another example of how the old EC readers are coming into positions of prominence, where they're doing things about EC because they loved it.

FELDSTEIN: But none of them went into wholesaling.

GAINES: Wouldn't that be something; 700 wholesalers that were old EC readers? Then we'll put out those comics that you're talking about. Anyway, this English company called Amicus approached me on the idea of doing the movie, and I was agreeable and we made a contract. They then got the backing of Metromedia, which you've probably heard of. Metromedia, among other things, owns Channel Five. Is the picture becoming clear? Metromedia then got Cinerama to distribute the movie. And it is through the good graces of Cinerama that we have a print of *Tales from the Crypt* here to show at the convention. They were very good about giving us the print; the idea of giving something away when you're still trying to sell it is something that's just never done in the movie industry. Now that's the story. The advertising campaign was sponsored and paid for by Cinerama, but a lot of it was done on Metromedia radio and TV stations, and maybe newspapers and magazines—God knows what they own.

QUESTION: *Another thing, the movie was reviewed in all the newspapers.*

GAINES: The way this movie was reviewed, I would have preferred it hadn't been. Two thirds of the reviews were bombs. Actually, most horror movies are reviewed and maybe you just don't notice it.

QUESTION: *The Nostalgia Press volume—are they going to do any more of them?*

GAINES: They would like to do a science fiction. *[Applause.]*

QUESTION: *Do you have any plans for doing a parody of the* Tales from the Crypt *movie in* Mad? *[Much laughter.]*

GAINES: You're always one step behind. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *What are your feelings on Joe Orlando's new magazines,* House of Mystery *and so forth?*

GAINES: I think Joe's doing a nice job considering he's hampered by the code. He's using one of our old writers, Carl Wessler. I was in Florida recently and I called Carl, and he was practically crying. He said, "For 20 years, every time I send them a plot they censor it. Why don't you come back in the business so I can write?" It's a real problem for these guys. A real old professional horror writer just can't work under the Code. It inhibits them and drives them crazy.

QUESTION: *Why don't you put out a horror comic in the* Mad *format, because* Mad *gets very good distribution?*

FELDSTEIN: How about *Mad Tales of Horror*? [Laughter.] *Mad* gets good distribution because it's a salable item.

GAINES: For 20 years it's been that. If it sells today, it's because we've been a good product over the years and it's gained acceptance. The wholesalers and dealers know it's going to sell, so they put it out.

QUESTION: *Did you have distribution problems when* Mad *was still a comic?*

GAINES: Oh, yes. The first three issues of *Mad* lost money. The fifth issue of *Mad*, of course, had my biography. That almost put us out of business, definitely. What happened was, in those days we were doing biographies of all the artists, and when Harvey got sick and was a page short, Feldstein and I decided to write something which wasn't really a biography of me, but which was what we thought everybody probably thought I was like. In those days it was the prevalent idea that a comic publisher must be a criminal type, of low educational background who probably ran whore houses on the side and

pushed dope, and like that. So we ran this biography which was really quite fictitious; there were only a few things in there that were true. *[Laughter.]* And we published it along with a picture of me that Al drew, with a halo over my head. We did a lot of *verboten* things that time, and the wholesalers were fit to be tied. It almost put us out of business. In fact, an association of Eastern wholesalers, the ECIDA, was meeting here in New York at the Hotel Commodore, and we had to literally compose and create a typewritten and illustrated apology in six copies for this committee of six, who were meeting to decide whether to put us out of business by simply refusing to handle our stuff. That's the power the wholesaler holds over the publisher. If he doesn't handle your stuff, you're dead. And we managed to convince them that we would mend our ways, which, of course, we didn't. So as a consequence, *Mad* # 5 is scarce because wholesalers were destroying it; it was a book burning with *Mad* # 5 because of this dreadful thing.

QUESTION: *Why don't you reprint that?*

GAINES: It would happen all over again, and I don't want to rock the boat. *[This biography was eventually reprinted, in* Mad Super Special *# 18, in 1975.]*

QUESTION: *That's self censorship.*

GAINES: That's *all* we have is self censorship. Al Feldstein and I have great rapport, and Al knows just exactly how far to go. And I don't think I've made a change in *Mad* more than once in two years on the average. I recently asked him to change something that I thought might be slightly libelous; but this is very rare.

QUESTION: *Is it true that Dr. Wertham has a complete set of EC comics? [Laughter.]*

GAINES: I doubt that very much.

QUESTION: *How were you able to write the comments by the Crypt Keeper and the Vault Keeper so well? This vehicle has been used by Warren, but yours seemed to fit the story context a lot better.*

GAINES: This was all the genius of Mr. Feldstein. It all flowed out of his pudgy little fingers. *[Applause.]* It was just as simple as that: talent. Al was able to write day after day, and in addition to writing the stories he did the very funny dreadful puns and all the chitchat of the GhouLunatics.

QUESTION: *Did Mr. Feldstein create the three characters?*

GAINES: Al drew them all originally, and then ultimately they were given out on a permanant basis to Jack and Graham and Johnny. For the last maybe three years those three always drew them, and if they didn't draw the story, photostats of their work were used. For example, when George Evans did a story in *The Vault of Horror* which was supposed to be told by the Vault Keeper, George would use a Craig photostat of the Vault Keeper for the opening panel where you'd see the Vault Keeper talking, and then it would go into the Evans artwork up to probably the last panel, which would have a little Vault Keeper saying, " 'Bye, I'm turning you over to the next one." And since each one of these comics was literally custom made, when Al and I sat down to write a story, we knew exactly who was going to illustrate the story and where it was going to be in the book, so that we would know which of the other characters he turned it over to. It was all formularized. And one of the reasons, I think, for our success was because everything was written with the artist in mind. When we wrote a story for a particular artist, we knew what he was strong with, so we looked for a story that would fit him.

FELDSTEIN: For example, if Bill had a plot that involved a husband and a luscious looking wife, we knew that wasn't for Ghastly.

QUESTION: *I'd just like to know . . .*

GAINES: I've got to hear this. Every once in a while we call on him just to find out what he's up to. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *The funny thing is I just forgot my question. [Laughter, applause.]*

GAINES: You couldn't beat that one.

VOICE: *There's a woman back here . . .*

GAINES: A woman! *[Applause.]*

QUESTION *[woman]: I'd like to know if you had any female readers back in the fifties.*

GAINES: Oh yes, absolutely—Marie. *[Laughter.]* Well, we had a lot of girls, but I'm sure it was predominantly boys. It was probably three to one, I would estimate. *Mad* today has a similar problem; I'd guess it was about two to one.

QUESTION: *Could you explain the photos you were pushing at one point? Were they real photos?*

GAINES: Is Paul Kast here? No? I'd hoped the guy who took them would be here. We had an office boy whose name was Paul Kast. He was also a friend of mine, which is why he was the office boy. That's the closest I get to . . . hiring relatives and friends and things. He was working his way through law school, or something. And he conceived this idea of taking these photographs and selling them. This was all his project. We had nothing to do with it. But we cooperated with him to the following extent. Johnny Craig posed for all three pictures. Al Feldstein made up Johnny for the pictures, and Paul took the pictures. Then he had them reproduced and we allowed him to sell them through our books at 10¢ apiece,

George Evans, Jack Davis, Wally Wood, Marie Severin.

three for a quarter. And I understand it paid for two years of college for him. *[Laughter.]* I just found out that Roger Hill has obtained from Johnny Craig something like 16 photographs of Al Feldstein making up Johnny Craig as these three characters. You'll get them in the next issue of *Squa Tront* [# 5].

QUESTION: *Are you familiar with the story "Judgment Day"? [Laughter, groans.]*

GAINES: I've heard tell of it. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *Could you tell about the . . .*

GAINES: Would you go over and sit with him? *[Laughter.]* We answered that question already.

QUESTION: *I'd like to direct this to Wally Wood and Marie Severin. Which is the better medium for horror: color, or black and white?*

WOOD: *The National Lampoon*, I'd say. *[Laughter.]* I think I preferred black and white.

SEVERIN: Well, Graham drew like a painter, and his black and white demanded color and it demanded distinctive color to come out right.

Photo: Roger Hill

Attending the convention: John Benson, Art Spiegelman, Bhob Stewart, Fred von Bernewitz

QUESTION: *Could each artist say what was their favorite story that they worked on?*

SEVERIN: I don't remember stories. Craig's . . . they were *all* interesting to do. They were good. But I can't remember any titles.

WOOD: Does this have to be a horror story?

QUESTION: *No.*

WOOD: I don't know, I sort of liked the one where the girl got married to an alien who clouded her mind.

VOICES: *"Spawn of Mars."* [Weird Fantasy *# 9.]*

DAVIS: I think the *Mad* story was the one, "The Lone Stranger." *[Mad # 3 and # 8.]* In the horror, it was about a fellow in the swamps down south with a club.

VOICES: *"Country Clubbing."* [The Haunt of Fear *# 23.]*

DAVIS: I don't even remember the title.

GAINES: "Country Clubbing"? That's a good title. *[Laughter.]*

EVANS: I don't recall the title either, but it was one of Al's stories about a browbeaten little English husband wearing a derby hat all the time, and he finally disposed of his wife the way Al's people always dispose of their wives.

VOICES: *[Various suggestions.]*

EVANS: I really can't . . . the titles don't stay in my mind.

QUESTION: *I know what Marie and Jack are doing. I'd like to know what Wally and George have been doing lately.*

WOOD: I've been doing some advertising. I have two comic strips now, which only appear in *The Overseas Weekly* for the armed forces. And I've been doing something for the underground press.

EVANS: I've been doing just about anything I can come up with including illustrating a couple of books, flying sort of stuff which has been a longtime hobby of mine, and spots for this, that and everything else. The big thing is I've been working as a ghost for the daily pages of one of the newspaper comic strips.

QUESTION: *Which one?*

EVANS: *Terry and the Pirates.*

QUESTION: *Mr. Wood, you've done all different kinds of comics. Which do you really like to do best?*

WOOD: I don't really know. I love science fiction, because I was a big science fiction fan; that was all I read. Right now . . . wait till you see my things for the underground press; you're not going to believe that.

GAINES: I think a clue to what Wally likes to do is what he did when he was doing *Witzend*, because there he had a chance to do anything he damn pleased. I think Wally really likes fantasy.

QUESTION: *Mr. Wood, in* Witzend *# 6 you ran your story "Spawn of Venus," the 3-D story. And you said it was one of the big money losers of all time. Would you mind telling how come?*

WOOD: Oh, yes. I remember what Bill paid for that; it was like half again what his normal page rates were. But besides drawing it, you had the technical problem of figuring how these things were going to overlap. The safest way to do that was to draw every figure complete, even the ones that were behind other figures. Then you had to opaque them like cels, paint every figure white in behind, so my whole apartment, the floors, the sofa, the chairs, *everything*, was covered. And this stuff didn't dry! *[Laughter.]* It was a job!

QUESTION: *Mr. Evans, how come all the characters you drew always had mustaches just like yours? [Laughter.] Was that subconscious?*

EVANS: It really was; I didn't know . . . *[Laughter.]* I didn't have one so I drew them with mustaches. Now I have one you see everybody clean shaven if I do any of that sort of thing.

GAINES: I think we should break up now, but before we go I want to tell you that preceding the *Tales from the Crypt* film this afternoon are two surprises.

About ten years ago we had to sue a general in Oklahoma who said that *Mad* was the most insidious propaganda in support of the communist cause that he had ever read. And we were in trouble in Oklahoma. So we sued him, and he retracted. What nobody knows is that I have the television film of him saying it, so you will see today the first public presentation in ten years of Brig. Gen. Clyde Watts calling *Mad* communistic. *[Applause.]* When I was in Russia in 1968 . . . *[laughter]* I had a wonderful visit at the *Krokodil* offices, which is roughly the Russian *Mad*. And I was talking to four *Krokodil* editors, and I wanted to make it very clear to them at the outset that I was not a Communist. This was after we had discussed our circulations, and one of the guys said, "With a two million circulation, I wouldn't think you'd be a Communist." *[Laughter.]*

The second surprise is a film called *The Fisherman*. This is a funny story. Al Feldstein many years ago got a plot and sat down and wrote a story called "Gone . . . Fishing" [Vault of Horror *# 22]*, and Jack Davis illustrated it. One day I was sitting in the Coronet Theater and this little short comes on, and I start watching this thing, and as it unfolds I'm getting this funny feeling in my stomach that I've seen this somewhere before, and then all of a sudden I said, "Oh, no, it couldn't be," and sure enough the end comes, and of course it's Al's snap ending, which I'm not going to tell you. And I say, "YAHH!" you know, and go running to my attorney. *[Laughter.]* Of course, I've stolen so many things I wasn't *that* mad *[laughter]*, but I thought that Al and I should get credit. So we made a deal with Columbia Pictures, who was distributing it, that they would put Al's and my name on as writers, and they would give us two free prints, one for Al and one for me. So you will see that print today.

THE WAR PANEL

Six P.M., Saturday, May 27, 1972

HARVEY KURTZMAN: We've only got one live mike here.

DAVIS: It's war surplus.

QUESTION: *Was your story "The Big If" [*Frontline Combat *# 5] supposed to be protesting war?*

KURTZMAN: All our stories really protested war. I don't think we thought war was very nice generally. The whole mood of our stories was that war isn't a good thing. You get killed. And "The Big If" is about a soldier who happens by coincidence to be in a certain place at a certain time and a shell explodes. He could have been several places, but he just happens to stop and gets killed. That's the way war is; you get killed suddenly for no reason.

QUESTION: *There was an early story where the airplanes come in and strike in Korea, and there's a big patriotic speech at the end. And to me it seemed a very false note. Someone told me that that was done in order to get your war books on the stands at Army posts, at which point the Army censor would no longer look at the books but you had the books on the stands.*

KURTZMAN: Not true. We never had a problem with getting the war books on the Army posts and we never wrote anything to tailor the books for the Army. Right, Bill?

GAINES *[from the floor]:* No. In an issue of *Mad* about 1958 Dave Berg did a story where he suggested that wars should be accomplished by just pitting a few athletic people on one side against the other—or else playing ping-pong matches (there was an early one, eh?), or playing chess. This had a little trouble with the PX's; we were banned on that one. But I don't recall any trouble with your war comics.

QUESTION: *Do you know the story I'm referring to? It used phrases like, "As long as we are on the side of The Good," with capital letters [probably "Contact" in* Frontline Combat *# 2, the last line of which was, "And remember, if we believe in* good *we can't go wrong!"]. It seemed like the only false note in any of those stories, which usually treated the enemy as human beings, which was an amazing thing in the middle of the Korean war.*

KURTZMAN: I think I remember the story. But frankly I don't remember the patriotic speech. I think there was a story where we talked about the efficacy of mechanical things, weapons, planes that a technological country like ours has. That's as far as my memory goes.

QUESTION: *In* Frontline Combat *# 4 there's a story "Combat Medic" where the Korean troops speak Korean. Is that authentic Korean?*

KURTZMAN: Yes, it was. As a matter of fact I remember badgering Jack on that story. I think we got a standard medical kit with all the tools, and I would say to Jack, "You've gotta have a suture here and a gauze pad here." Remember that? And I went to the Korean consulate for the language, so it was as authentic as we could make it.

QUESTION: *What are they saying? [Laughter.]*

KURTZMAN: Funny thing; I can repeat the Korean, but I can't remember what it means. I think it was like "Potrzebie." *[Laughter.]*

WILL ELDER: If you'd read the titles on the bottom of the page . . . did you notice them?

QUESTION: *From time to time, yes.*

KURTZMAN: He's lying. There were never . . . It was something like, "Eyoro kill kassus." I think it meant something like, "I'm hungry."

ELDER: You insulted my wife. *[Laughter.]*

KURTZMAN: Everybody knows this is Will Elder. He's slightly mad.

ELDER: *Slightly Mad*'s another magazine. It's a smaller magazine.

KURTZMAN: He's slightly *Annie Fanny. [Elder points quizzically to his chest.]* Very slightly. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *When you said in your comics, "This is a true story," were those always true?*

KURTZMAN: When I said it, it was true.

QUESTION: *Could you rap on that a bit—the ways you'd talk to veterans.*

KURTZMAN: I think that we can all probably talk about it. When I started thinking about the problems involved in

Above: Jack Davis, Will Elder, Harvey Kurtzman, George Evans, Wally Wood, Jerry De Fuccio.

doing the stories, I'd send Jerry De Fuccio on assignments to pick up material. And Jerry can probably tell you about the trip when he went down in a submarine, and when we sent him up in a rocket.

JERRY DE FUCCIO: Jack Davis was doing a story called "Silent Service" *[Two-Fisted Tales # 32]*. Harvey asked me, "What do you know about submarines?" So I said, "I only have a six foot shelf on submarines at home." And Harvey said, "That isn't enough. You're going to New London, Connecticut. You're going to the sub base and you're going to get a lot of information. I want you to come home with sound effects: the sound of the claxon, the diving bell and the supper chimes." So I went up there and the public information officer was under the impression that I was to go out on the USS Guardfish, the training sub. I figured that this was a little wrinkle that Harvey had planned for me, so we went out in the Long Island Sound. We submerged, and it was quite fascinating.

Harvey wasn't very trusting. He said, "When you get up to New London, give me a phone call." So instead, I sent him a telegram that read, "Many brave hearts are asleep in the deep, glub glub." It was really a fascinating tour. But the trouble with doing these stories was that you'd get all wrapped up in the history of the Alamo, and you almost had no desire to go on to the next topic, which was some other distant far away war or battle.

WOOD: How about the dumbo; you took a trip in the dumbo.

KURTZMAN: I took a trip in the dumbo. Wally is talking about a story that I wrote and Wally drew, about Grumman amphibious rescue planes *["Albatross" in* Frontline Combat *# 14]*, and I went up in a plane. And when I got out to the airfield, they strapped a parachute on my back. We took off in a sea plane; it was very thrilling. And I kept saying, "Why the parachute?" We were well over the water by that time, and they said, "Well, this actually isn't an ordinary flight; we're test flying the plane, because every time we sell an airplane we have to test it out. So we put a parachute on you in case things happen." They shut off one engine. Then they shut off the second engine. And like that. And I think it was then that I decided to get an assistant. From that point forward, *Jerry* started going up in the airplanes.

Have we exhausted ourselves on our research experiences?

DE FUCCIO: I knew I was a real veteran when I was given a cast iron model of a Mauser to bring to Wally's house in Forest Hills, and I was on a crowded subway platform and it fell out of the paper bag. *[Laughter.]* And I picked it up very casually, and then I knew that I was . . .

KURTZMAN: Did you ever try to pull the trigger? It wasn't cast iron. Your assignment was to go to Wally and *kill*! *[Laughter.]* He was late for a deadline.

QUESTION: *In reference to stories like the one on the amphibious rescue plane, which was interesting factually and all of that, but it came toward the end, as opposed to the beginning when you had these incredibly grisly anti-war stories portraying war as something really terrible. Was that a conscious decision, or is that just the way things worked out?*

KURTZMAN: You probably sense something that in fact was true. There was a certain amount of complicity with the Air Force in the airplane story. That is, we wanted to do stories on the planes themselves, the technology of this or that plane. And we'd go to the Air Force and try to do a technological story as well as a human story. You sense the fact that we were working with a machine rather than with people as we might in one of our "people" war stories, where we'd work on the level of a GI, a single soldier having an experience in combat.

DE FUCCIO: There's a later story called "Sailor" *[Frontline Combat # 11]* about a Navy medic which was pretty damn grisly. I think Wally drew that.

WOOD: No, I think Jack Davis drew that.

QUESTION: *But on the whole it seems that the editorial policy of the war books changed from a really cynical look at the institution of war to one of giving credit to all these guys doing a brave job. I'm not trying to bring up a moral question, but it's an interesting change.*

KURTZMAN: There was no conscious . . . There *was* a point where we changed the system of doing the issues, and I'm sure that's reflected in the contents late along in the line. But always consciously our main theme was to talk about war, to tell about war like it was. I was always conscious of that purpose. But we were constantly experimenting with different kinds of stories. *[There is an outbreak of coughing on the podium.]* One of our panel is dying. *[Elder rushes to the rescue; sets out many paper cups to be filled; turns it into a shell game; laughter.]*

QUESTION: *This has been bothering me for about 15 years . . .*

KURTZMAN: I'd see a doctor if I were you. *[Laughter; applause.]* Does that answer your question?

QUESTION: *I don't know who drew it, but do you suppose that the aeolipile could be construed as a modern weapon of warfare?*

KURTZMAN: That gentleman picked up something out of our *Mad* comics. Do you know that they took aeolipile out of the modern Webster dictionary? Does anyone not know what an aeolipile is?

ELDER: Hemorrhoids, with something around it. *[Laughter; the microphone gives out a hideous screech; Elder cleans out his ear with his little finger; laughter.]*

KURTZMAN *[desperately]*: What's that got to do with our war panel?

QUESTION: *Did you ever get caught up in one particular historical period when you were writing the war stories? Did you prefer one over another?*

KURTZMAN: Well, we got into the Civil War thing. It was a favorite project of mine. We were hot to do the story of the Civil War from front to back. I think we almost reached Gettysburg and then quit.

WOOD: We did Gettysburg; we did that first.

KURTZMAN: No, we didn't do Gettysburg first did we?

DE FUCCIO: Sumter was first.

KURTZMAN: Sumter? What do you mean, Sumter?? Excuse us folks. We may have a little fight up here.

WOOD: Gettysburg was the first story.

KURTZMAN: We started the series trying to highlight the most vital personalities in the war, and then the opening shot at Fort Sumter, if I'm not mistaken. But we did Lincoln, Grant and Lee in separate issues. I think the very first story was Lincoln. *[Both Wood and Kurtzman are correct. "Gettysburg" in* Frontline Combat *# 2 was the first story about the Civil War to appear. "Abe Lincoln" in* Frontline Combat *# 9 was the first story in the Civil War Special Issue series.]*

QUESTION *[Howard Chaykin]*: *Knowing John Severin's politics at the time . . . [laughter] . . . everyone's been talking about that . . .*

KURTZMAN: I think you ought to address that question to his sister. Marie Severin, stand up. *[Applause.]* Marie used to color our war comics

QUESTION *[Chaykin, apparently amazed]*: *Really!*

KURTZMAN: She was the best. And she would share the aggravation of authenticity with us.

SEVERIN *[from the floor]*: I certainly did.

KURTZMAN: If she didn't get the color right she had to do double time around the parade ground with a rifle. And you asked?

QUESTION *[Chaykin]*: *You didn't let me finish the beginning of the question. It seemed that because of the anti-war tone of the book, Severin did more historical stories, like the Tubridy stories. Did he object to doing stories that were, if not blatantly, apparently subtly against war?*

KURTZMAN: John had a great feeling for history. He was a collector of costumes and war memorabilia, and he was just the best war history nut going that I knew of. And so he came quite naturally to historical war stories. He was fantastically good, and still is, at historical costumes and weapons. I think Marie'll attest to that.

QUESTION *[Chaykin]*: *Did he actually have any objection to doing a story that was . . . you know . . .*

KURTZMAN: Well, I think we have that problem with all artists. You always have that problem in writers working with artists, where they very often don't see eye to eye with you and they have feelings about it. No two people think alike. I'm sure John had objections. I'm sure that at one time or another

we all had objections. Right, gang? *[laughter; Elder thumbs his nose; the microphone gives out another ungodly squawk; Elder checks his watch by holding it to his ear; laughter]*

QUESTION: *Could you compare your war books to the current war comics, especially DC, with its "Make war no more."*

KURTZMAN: Maybe someone else here is up on what they're doing today. Frankly, I'm not.

WOOD: I've seen that, Harvey. It's Sgt. Rock in "War is Fun," and at the very last panel is this little blurb that they stick on, "Make war no more." He'll kill thousands of Germans, but . . .

QUESTION *[Mark Kotowski]: In the story "War Machines" [*Frontline Combat *# 5], the soldier is portrayed as a fighting machine. They had to take a mountain and they went in and cleaned it out like the good machine. John Severin lent a certain strength and almost mechanized movement to the figures, in contrast to your art in "The Big If," which created a very human, almost pathetic, character. And I wondered if this was intentional, if you gave a story of that type to Severin, and a more . . .*

KURTZMAN: I'm sure that various strips were given to various artists because of the relationship to their ability, or their enthusiasm, to do that kind of story. But in the two stories you mentioned, the focus of attention was different. In "The Big If," the attention was on a personality, a human being, and the fact that he loses his life. And it's a very tragic event, because you recognize him as a person. The other story was about machinery.

QUESTION *[Kotowski]: No, it was about the foot soldier as a piece of machinery.*

KURTZMAN: Well, I think I made the point that machines are very important to battles today, but in the end it's the human being who's really the most significant factor, and I think that's borne out by Viet Nam today. You don't win wars with machinery, you win them with people on the ground. But in that particular story there was no room really to concentrate on the people we were talking about. I think the point was made that the soldier is the most important one of a series of weapons. There was no intention to make the soldier appear mechanical or a non-person. But unfortunately that's the point that came across to you, I see. But it served the purposes of the story, and I don't feel guilty about it.

QUESTION: *This is not to open old wounds, but . . .*

KURTZMAN: Oh, oh, here it comes . . .

QUESTION: *. . . I'd like to know how the individual artists felt working with the very strict layouts.*

KURTZMAN: I'd like to hear that, too.

DAVIS: I don't know. I think the end product came out pretty good—the detail and all. There's a lot of people that appreciate detail and there's a lot of people that don't. Once you do something you like it to be authentic. Where doing the horror books you didn't have to be authentic, this was something that you'd like for it to come across as true, and Harvey felt very strongly about truth—the way the weapons worked and everything. We did the best we could, and I enjoyed it. It wasn't that bad. I'd hate to do it all the time.

ELDER: Harvey was a very good talker. In the early stages of the war comics he would sit down with most of the artists and describe the story to them panel by panel, and he'd go through the sound effects. He'd say, "This guy is holding a gun and he lets go a blast, BRRRRAOWW!" And I said, "My God, you ought to put yourself on a record." And before you knew it you got very absorbed in the story and it became very interesting.

KURTZMAN: BHLOOH! BHOOM! AKAKAKAKAK! *[Laughter.]*

ELDER: Yes dear, I'll be home in a minute. And so you got so absorbed in the story because of Harvey's descriptions that eventually you saw the thing laid out as he described it, and before you knew it you were very much involved. I found it very interesting.

EVANS: The first thing I did for Harvey was the story of Napoleon *[*Frontline Combat *# 10]*, and Harvey wanted me to draw every one of Napoleon's troops, and every one of the Austrians, the Prussians, the Russians and everything else. And he had taken the time . . .

KURTZMAN: Uh uh. Not every one.

EVANS: Complete with uniforms and name tags.

KURTZMAN: All I wanted was *half* the Napoleonic army, not all of it. We didn't have enough room in the panel. You didn't have to draw their feet.

EVANS: I drew little dots; but Harvey had meticulously done all those before that. I think he knew every man's name that was in it.

KURTZMAN: You'd better believe it.

EVANS: So I just decided that I didn't have about five or six years to put into this, and I did it with variations on his tight layouts. I didn't work for Harvey for a little over a year or so, and John Severin had done a story of something about flying in World War I, and we were out having dinner together, and Harvey and his desire for authenticity came up, and somebody commented on it, and I said, "Fine, but he had a couple of mistakes." And from that point on . . . heh heh.

KURTZMAN: *I* had a couple of mistakes??

EVANS: The story had a couple of mistakes in it.

KURTZMAN: All these many years, and you choose to tell me now? *I* had a couple of mistakes??

EVANS: You did . . . you did . . . I agreed then to do those air stories. After, I think, you vowed never to have another Evans drawing in your pages.

KURTZMAN: Wait a minute. Who made the mistakes? *You* made the mistakes!

EVANS: No, no, no. I *corrected* them.

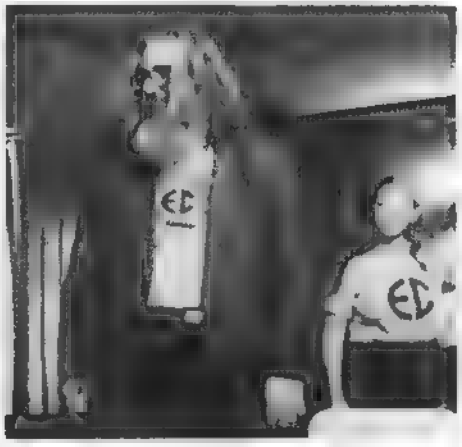
KURTZMAN: *I* made the mistakes??

EVANS *[flustered]:* Well, the point was, this story . . . heh heh.

KURTZMAN: *YOU'RE FIRED!! [Laughter.]*

EVANS: Anyway, at a given point I began working for Harvey again. He had put all this time and effort and so on

Wally Wood. *Bill Gaines.* *Jack Davis and Jerry De Fuccio.*



into his meticulous layouts, and we would go over them and he would explain what he had in mind. And even though I didn't have it in mind, I drew it the way Harvey wanted . . . for the most part. But every now and again Harvey looked distressed, but we got on pretty well.

KURTZMAN: Listen, we did that Immelman turn. We drew the Immelman turn, hah?

EVANS: About those mistakes. You want to go into the Immelman turn? That's not a dance step, the Immelman turn.

KURTZMAN: We're saving the best for last; Wally?

WOOD: Actually, what Harvey would do was not just write the story, but give us layouts for every panel . . .

EVANS: . . . and every man in every panel . . .

WOOD: . . . which I didn't feel . . .

KURTZMAN: Just because I gave you a diagram on where to go to the bathroom during the coffee break, you didn't have to get sore. Chees!

WOOD: . . . and I can honestly say that most of the time it didn't make any trouble, because that's about the way I would have done it anyway. *[Laughter.]* But there were times when I changed Harvey's layouts, right?

KURTZMAN: The skeletons in the closet are all coming out. Yeah, we used to talk about this all the time, and in my own defense I must point out that all of these guys were the greatest cartoonists of that particular period—and today—and as such they were all very strong individuals. I, too, have my own individuality, and it had to clash. The fact that we did get along as well as we did I think was amazing, because we did overlap so much, and if we weren't on the same wavelengths, we'd really be stepping on each other's toes. But I don't think we had that much friction, and I think it's a tribute to the particular guys here. They were an unusually easy group to work with. I've worked with a lot of people in my time, and *[mock gravity]* these four are some of the best. *[Elder heaves a deep sigh.]*

QUESTION: *What was the thinking behind the format change from* Two-Fisted Tales *to the* New Two-Fisted Tales, *when it went to espionage, etc.?*

KURTZMAN: Well, very simply I think I stopped doing *Two-Fisted Tales.* That is, I stopped writing the stories, and we started experimenting with new story arrangements. I was moving on to other things. *[Bill Gaines stands up.]* Mr. Gaines, the father of us all.

GAINES: My recollection of what happened there was that you no longer had the time for *Two-Fisted Tales* because *Mad* went monthly, and secondly, the Korean war being over, the war books stopped selling as such, and we dropped *Frontline Combat* and we converted *Two-Fisted Tales* into an adventure book.

VOICE: Actually, it just reverted back to its . . .

KURTZMAN: Yeah. When we'd originally started *Two-Fisted Tales,* the concept was we were going to do blood and thunder tales and rip-roaring adventure.

QUESTION: *Harvey, in most of the stories you drew yourself I noticed there was an absence of a lot of color. A panel would be only one or two colors. Was this a direction on your part to the colorist, and why did you choose to do it that way? I personally liked the more varied colors like in the voodoo story in the second issue of* Two-Fisted Tales *["Jivaro Death"].*

KURTZMAN: The voodoo story?

VOICE: The one that was stolen

KURTZMAN: Stolen??

VOICE: Inspired . . .

KURTZMAN *[mock offense]:* I don't know what he's talking about.

EVANS: Genius is when you know how to be inspired and rise above the original, right?

KURTZMAN: Right. Anyhow, we started experimenting with color. Color had been pretty slapdash, without any overall plan or system. The color would generally be out of our hands; it'd be done at the engravers. And sometimes we wanted the color to do special things. A case in point was in one airplane story *["Panther Jet" in* Frontline Combat *# 13].* When airplanes were ready below deck in aircraft carriers, the below decks was bathed in red light; the condition was always red down below there. And we wanted that, so we used a monotone of red. I think my absolute favorite color story was the one that Jack did, where the whole thing was in blacks and blues *["B-26 Invader" in* Frontline Combat *# 12].* It was a night bombing mission where the B-26 takes off in the dark and bombs in the dark and comes back in the dark, and we did it all in blues and little pinpoints of yellow. That was really exciting to me, the fact that it wasn't color everywhere. I didn't miss it.

QUESTION: *In devoting such a major portion of your time for several years to writing stories about war, from the beginning of the first* Two-Fisted Tales *to the end of the period, did your own viewpoint of war, or any of the facets of it, change, and if so, how?*

KURTZMAN: It didn't affect me *LOOK OUT!! [he dives under the table].* No . . . I was pretty much against war, and I still think it's a dreadful business, and I haven't ever felt any differently. I just think it's a terrible blight that visits us again and again, and it's something that we could well do without. It's unfortunate that we haven't figured a way out of wars.

DE FUCCIO: Harvey, when you first went into the service, you had an experience. They were tearing up an old barracks and there were these rats' nests there, and these men went wild and they were clubbing these rats to death, and that made a terrible impression on you.

KURTZMAN: Jerry really hauls them out of the cellar. Well, I'd forgotten that little episode in my life. But the cruelty of that moment where we did discover rats under that barracks . . . the little animals running in every direction, and there's this platoon of guys just having a wild old time smashing them . . . *was* to me an example of man's irreverence to . . .

VOICE: . . . to rats.

KURTZMAN: Yes, even rats. I just had a very strong feeling that if mankind did have more of a reverence for life that possibly we'd have less killing.

SEVERIN: Is that the extent of your war experience?

KURTZMAN: Well, I can tell you about some wild times in Galveston, but that's not what we came here for. As a matter of fact, I think that Wally and Willy really had the war experiences, and Jack got out of the country a lot more than I did. I think Jack was in China. Willy was in the Battle of the Bulge. Wally was in the Murmansk Run. And George was flying with the Richtofen squad.

EVANS: I was in the flying training command.

KURTZMAN: And I was in the pearldivers—the dishwashers platoon. I did a lot of KP.

QUESTION: *Do you have any thoughts on* Blazing Combat, *which got squelched?*

VOICE: *What do you mean, "got squelched?"*

QUESTION: *I'm not familiar with . . .*

KURTZMAN: Not a thought in my head.

ELDER *[incredulous]:* You're not familiar with a thought in your head? *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: . . . *the details on that. Apparently they weren't well distributed, or banned from PX's, or something, because of the anti-Viet Nam stories they had before that was popular*

EVANS: I did one or two pages of fillers for them. I knew the sales were not good, but I didn't know that it was due to distribution problems.

WOOD: I'm sure that's not it. War comics just don't sell.

QUESTION: *In retrospect it seems that you were doing anti-war stories. At the time you were doing them, was that apparent to your readership? Did you get any reactions to that type of story?*

KURTZMAN: No, we never got into that. I think simply because our—or certainly my—point of view is: I don't regard myself as a man who pushes specific opinions or strong points of view. I like to think that I spend my time trying to describe what's true and what is, and to describe it as well as I can. And that's what the research was all about; that's what going down in submarines was all about; and when I did "human" stories on particular soldiers, that's why I talked to soldiers, and asked them . . . Do you mean, "Did the readers miss the point?"

QUESTION: *Did they think you were trying to do something else? Did you get angry letters from people?*

Jack Davis, Will Elder, George Evans, Wally Wood, Jerry De Fuccio.

KURTZMAN: Well the readers always think all kinds of things. But generally we never had trouble with readers, or censorship, or . . . I don't think we made people mad, generally speaking. But you never know what the audience is thinking. I never tried to make my audience think any one thing. The audience to me is a great unpredictable beast.

EVANS: That's a very good question, if I understand what you're saying, and I think my answer to it would be that things are colored by the times you live in, and there was no real push at the time as to whether people were really anti-war or pro-war. And so the stories were taken pretty much as entertainment. From what mail I saw, you were more likely to get a criticism that you had the wrong unit badges or something of that sort. Nowadays, everything, you realize, *everything* is considered propaganda! At the time there may have been some leaning in that direction, but I don't think it reached down to the people that were reading the sort of thing we did. If you'll recall, at the time other magazines all the way up to the very high-price slicks were publishing war stories, some reasonably anti-war and some real gung-ho, and either people accepted it as entertainment or ignored it. And I think that's the way it was with us. As I say, your big criticisms were if you had the wrong cap on somebody, or this particular rifle wasn't yet used. But in the light of our time we think *everything* has a message.

I don't think the stories that were assigned to me carried a message, other than those that were biographical, when Harvey was really reflecting the *person's* point of view. For instance, he took Immelman who was a German flyer and an extremely arrogant man who believed that the Kaiser was next to, or maybe above God if it came to that. And Harvey put him across that way as a man who was doing what he considered the Kaiser's and God's will and the fact that he was killing people didn't bother him. And that's the way Harvey presented the story. You got an excellent picture of Immelman without moralizing. And if anyone chose to take anything out of it, he was really looking below or above levels that we were working on.

DE FUCCIO: Harvey did emphasize that the enemy was human. He showed that they had kids, and pictures in their wallets and all that, just as the Americans did.

KURTZMAN: The enemy had problems, too.

DE FUCCIO: They were really compassionate war stories, I think.

EVANS: But not propaganda.

KURTZMAN: That's it. I personally don't like propagandizing from either end. I don't like to have it come at me, and I don't like to dish it out.

QUESTION: *In your considered opinion, who was the best artist who worked for you? [Laughter.]*

KURTZMAN: That's an easy question to answer, because everybody sitting here is remarkable in his own special way . . . I'm lying—I'll tell you later.

QUESTION: *The first issue of* Two-Fisted Tales, *# 18, was edited by Al Feldstein, as I understand. You started editorship with # 19, right?*

KURTZMAN: I literally edited from the beginning. There may have been a technicality of the credits, but . . .

QUESTION: *I was wondering who scripted the stories in # 18 You did an Aztec story, "Conquest." Did you script your own story?*

KURTZMAN: Yes. I think you're right; I think Al was involved in the first issue.

QUESTION: *Wally's story was on a South American revolution.*

KURTZMAN: That's right! God, that's right! How do you remember all this?

QUESTION: *I just bought the issue. It cost me $30.*

KURTZMAN *[ruminating]:* I killed the rats . . . *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *"Hong Kong Intrigue" was drawn by Feldstein. Who scripted that?*

KURTZMAN: That was probably Al.

DE FUCCIO: That must be Al's. He did *The Yellow Claw* later on for one issue.

QUESTION: *I was wondering if y'all would like to talk about the Civil War issues. They were the ones I liked best. It was too bad you couldn't continue the series.*

KURTZMAN: I think Jack was the first artist on those, so why don't we hear from him.

DAVIS: The only thing I know is that Harvey is very good with his research, and *[the microphone emits a piercing screech]* . . .

VOICE: It's a Yankee microphone.

DAVIS: . . . and the South really won the war, that's all there is to it. *[Laughter.]*

KURTZMAN: I thought Jack'd bring that up. We've been trying to tell him . . . the South didn't win the war.

DAVIS: The stories I did were pro-Southern.

KURTZMAN: Yeah. We put Jack on the pro-Southern stories and we put Wally on the anti-Southern stories.

WOOD: You had me do "Gettysburg." "Gettysburg" was the first Civil War story you ran. We did that about a year before you started the series.

KURTZMAN: Maybe I wasn't so accurate in my stuff after all. I'm being caught in inaccuracies right and left here. Well, it's possible.

WOOD: No, I'm sure of it, because I went to Gettysburg and I came back and I started to work on the story. We had no idea of a series then.

KURTZMAN: Now, wait a minute . . . we did a separate Civil War story. You're right. But it wasn't a part of the series.

QUESTION: *Did you enjoy doing* Two-Fisted Tales *more than* The Haunt of Fear, *where the stories were just made up? Did you enjoy getting the facts?*

KURTZMAN: Yeah. And I enjoyed it for the reason that I tried to express before. I enjoyed thinking that I was telling little known true stories. It was the truth stories that I was interested in putting down on paper; vignettes of truth.

QUESTION: *Do you see any possibility of an adventure comic coming out today, geared towards adults?*

KURTZMAN: It's always possible. As a matter of fact, if you look at the European comic books, they're doing fantastic things on an adult level, beautiful cartoons. It's always possible, sure. It's being done even as we speak.

QUESTION: *The people on the horror panel were pretty pessimistic about it.*

KURTZMAN: There's always pessimism. Then a guy comes along and does it, and then the pessimism vanishes.

EVANS: If you're really buffs of this sort of thing, the Civil War, the historical aspects, and so on, there are all kinds of societies which put out a great deal of very accurate information and material. There are Civil War clubs, which publish journals, Revolutionary War clubs, and, of course, John Severin belongs to the American Historical Society, which puts out plates and whatnot, and there are two aviation societies which put out extremely accurate information. So anybody who's a real buff of this stuff . . .

QUESTION: *Did the war comics ever play a part or were they mentioned in the hearings concerning horror comics?*

KURTZMAN: I really don't remember.

EVANS: There was this much; whether they were involved in the senate hearings or not, they came under the Comics Code thing, and it became impossible to do anything, because there were such idiotic things as, for example, if you had a ship explode with silhouettes of six bodies being blown up off the deck, they'd come up with the idea of taking three out to minimize the violence by half. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *Was there an outline or a regular script that the artist would follow when doing a story?*

KURTZMAN: It was already lettered when the artist would draw it, if I'm not mistaken.

WOOD: Yeah.

QUESTION: *You said something earlier about pictures right on the pages.*

WOOD: The overlays; you used to do them on the overlays.

KURTZMAN: Yeah, we'd storyboard the story, and then the letterer would put the lettering right in on the unfinished art.

QUESTION: *Did you use a typewriter?*

KURTZMAN: No. I couldn't use a typewriter—only with a pencil, like this *[demonstrates]*.

VOICE: I think while he was working on it, he was rubbing across the page with his elbow.

QUESTION: *On the team of Severin and Elder, how did you split up your duties?*

ELDER: John Severin was a remarkable artist as far as drawing uniforms, soldiers. He had a great sense of history; it was his hobby as I pointed out earlier. I didn't. I was more of a humorist; I never could get into that corner of it while working on the war stories. Eventually it did come along. John was very facile at that type of work. Now, John at that time didn't have the ability to dramatize it in black and white, and I did. I had a little experience doing that; in fact, that was my facility. John was a marvelous artist, had great historical background, and drew very rapidly. And there was always a time element involved. I was very fast with the inking and dramatization of the stories, and together we seemed to work very well and very rapidly. And this thing had to be *out*, you know; deadlines don't wait for anyone.

QUESTION: *Did the other artists pencil and ink their own work?*

KURTZMAN: Pretty much. It's always good if the guy handles the whole thing. The more you handle yourself, the more artistic the product is, because you have more control. I think we're running out of questions. *[Many hands go up in the audience.]* And we just got word that the whole place blows up in . . . Yes, from the kid there. A three year old kid. You weren't around when we were doing comic books.

QUESTION: *Mr. Elder, how come you didn't do more horror stories like "Strop, You're Killing Me"* [Tales from the Crypt *# 37]?*

ELDER: I think it was kind of against my grain. I never dug that type of bag. As I mentioned before, I'm a humorist. I love humor; it's the only way I can express myself. I think each one of us here can express himself in a certain avenue of art, and this is my strongest point. Now, why do anything less than that; it'd only be foolish. So until *Mad* came along, which was just right for me, I worked in horror because it was making a living. It's as simple as that. It wasn't so simple sometimes.

QUESTION: *How did you decide which topics to get into, editorially?*

KURTZMAN: Well, at one time we had a policy that we'd do two contemporary stories and two historical stories, something like that. A very crude division. We'd try to do one from the past, one from the present, and one from the middle. Does that make sense?

QUESTION: *I was wondering, have you ever done any work in films?*

KURTZMAN: As a matter of fact, there's a film you can see me in this very week. I'm in a Scripto commercial. I want you to know that after all these years I've wound up selling pencils. *[Laughter.]* And that's the extent of my film career.

QUESTION: *I thought that since writing and editing a comic book is similar in many ways to directing a film . . .*

KURTZMAN: Similar in many ways, but film is a whole different thing. It's like, everybody used to say, "Why doesn't Will Eisner *film*?" And you know, we devote our lives to our particular thing, and the fact that we do something that barely relates to films doesn't mean that we're entitled to then jump into films. It's really not that simple, because you have to devote yourself to whatever you're in. Yes, the gentleman over there . . .

QUESTION: *Didn't you . . . you go first . . .*

KURTZMAN: Actually I meant the other one. *[Questioner pantomimes a punch to neighbor Archie Goodwin.]* Fight; go ahead, hit him. *[Goodwin lifts chair in retaliation. Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *What about the animated film that's on TV tonight,* Mad Monster Party?

VOICES *[including Goodwin]: Right.*

KURTZMAN *[groans and clutches his throat]:* Well, I think I'll go home now folks. I wrote for them like one evening and made about $3,000, and then they threw it all out the window and they put my name on it. It's totally irrelevant to anything I do or did.

QUESTION: *When is your book coming out?*

KURTZMAN: We're scheduled to publish this year, but the publishing date seems to be elusive. It advances in front of me.

QUESTION: *What gave you the idea to write a history of comics? [Laughter.]*

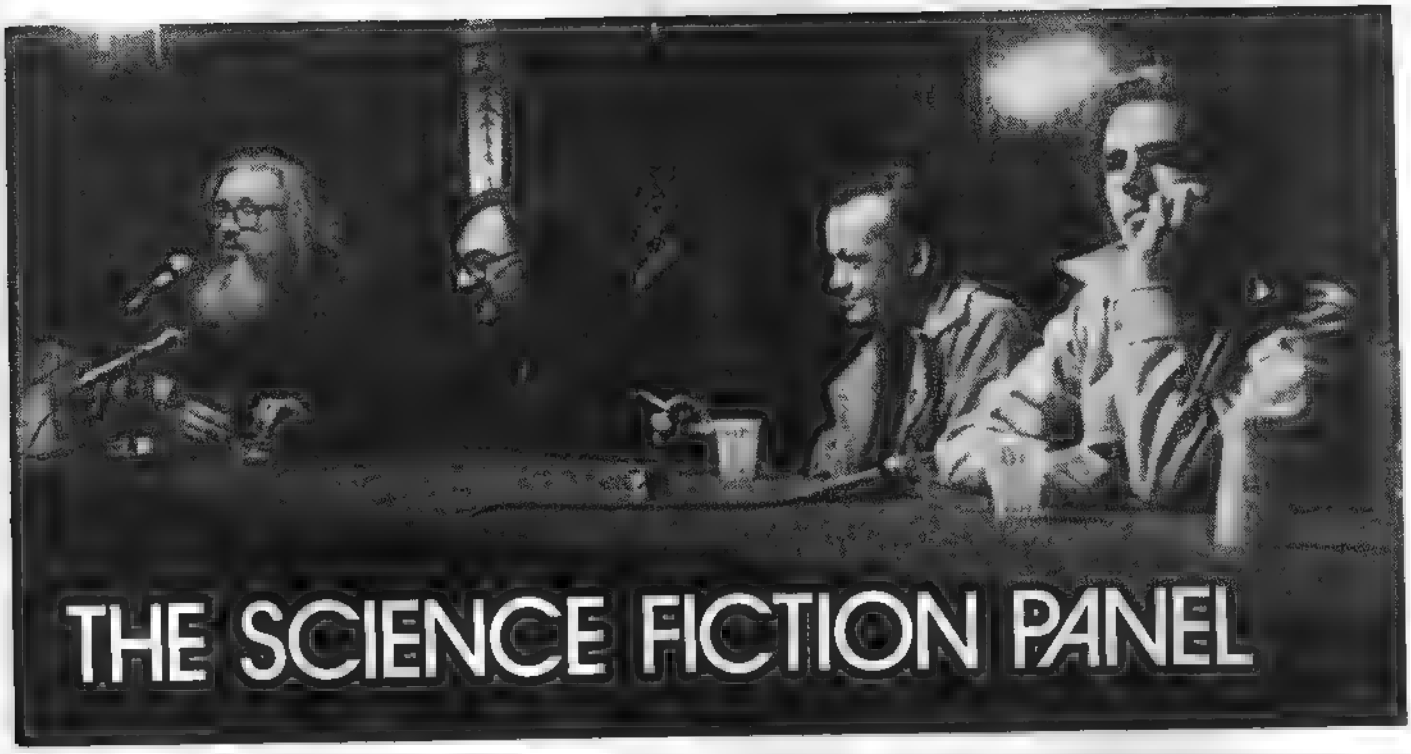
KURTZMAN: I suddenly got this incredible original inspiration. *[Laughter.]* Well, it started out that a publishing company asked me to do it, and . . . can't we talk about girls, or something?

QUESTION: *Where did you get your pictorial research information, to make the war stories so accurate?*

DAVIS: I usually let EC supply the material for me; Jerry did the research. And I have a library of books on pistols and shotguns and things of this sort.

KURTZMAN: Yeah, it's pretty cut and dried. I used to go to the Army and get lots of catalogues. *[In confidential tones]* I've got a collection of restricted catalogues, let me tell you. Talk about the Pentagon Papers . . . if they knew about my catalogues. You get information from training manuals, catalogues, newspapers, *Life* magazine. I had a live hand grenade sitting in the middle of my studio.

Any techniques I haven't covered? Fascinating bits of information, right folks? I think this may be a good time to break it up.



THE SCIENCE FICTION PANEL

One P.M., Sunday, May 28, 1972

GAINES: Well, you've got the heart and meat of the whole EC science fiction people right here. With the exception of Feldstein, who wrote it and did some covers, these are the three science fiction greats, and I'm delighted that all three of them were able to make this panel. Because this is *it*; I mean, there ain't no more. Wally Wood, I guess, was the dean, and the first of the science fiction artists to come to EC. And Wally kind of brought Joe and Al along with him. And this was it. So let's just throw it right open to questions. *[Silence. Laughter.]* That was the quickest panel in the history of comic cons.

QUESTION: *Bill, is Al going to be here later? [Laughter.]*

GAINES: I'm afraid Al Feldstein has left us for the glories of his home on the lake somewhere.

QUESTION: *What about* The National Lampoon? *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *You once answered a letter that dealt with a story about vivisection to the effect that the stories weren't written to make any moral point. But all of the stories seemed to have some teaching purpose in the sense of making us more aware. Toward the end of the science fiction books, the stories, it seemed to me, became very obviously morally oriented toward anti-war. Earth was always being isolated by the rest of the universe because of its war-making capacities. Was that a conscious editorial decision?*

GAINES: Yes. If we ever answered a letter that we were not trying to teach anything with our science fiction stories, we were lying. I don't remember any such answer to a letter, but if you say we did it, we did it. On the contrary, science fiction traditionally has been a great vehicle for an author to try to teach a moral or ethical lesson, and we certainly were doing that throughout the entire history of EC's science fiction stuff. And if we said differently, I can't imagine why we did, except that we thought it was good business to say it or something, I don't know. As for the second part of what you said, it wasn't so much an anti-war stand as probably a belief on my part at that time that People Are No Damn Good. This was a well known strain that you'd see running through a lot of science fiction stories, that the whole galaxy was so disgusted with Man that they would isolate him. "Don't let him out of where he's coming from, 'cause he'll only make trouble." It wasn't anti-war *per se*; it was anti-people.

QUESTION: *In the horror you gave certain artists certain types of stories. Did the same go for science fiction?*

GAINES: Not as much, because these three guys could do anything. We did give certain kinds of stories to Jack Kamen. If you remember, Jack Kamen would do the kind of story where people would mix up girls in the bathtub out of instant powder. Kamen drew pretty girls, but he didn't do rocket ships or anything like that. That stuff usually went to these three guys. If it came to equipment, Williamson, with the aid of Krenkel, or Wally or Joe were unsurpassed in futuristic equipment and rocket ships and BEMs—Bug-Eyed Monsters, we used to call them BEMs. Do they still call them BEMs?

VOICES: *Yes.*

QUESTION: *What did you people think when the Comics Code tried to tell you that the magazines you were publishing were too horrible for children and they wanted to change it all?*

GAINES: Well, of course we thought it was absurd, and I'm sure we all still do. The Code was directed more at horror and crime comics than the science fiction, although we had to change the name of our science fiction from *Weird Science-Fantasy* to *Incredible Science Fiction* because the word "weird" was not allowed on a comic book. And, of course, I'm sure most of you folks know the story of how the Torres story *["An Eye for an Eye"]*, which is in Woody Gelman's Nostalgia Press volume, would not be passed by the Code because it was too dreadful to suggest that somebody had three eyes. And we

Above: Bill Gaines, Joe Orlando, Wally Wood, Al William-

had to substitute Joe Orlando's "Judgment Day," which was perfectly all right with everybody.

QUESTION: *I'd like to ask Joe Orlando, who's now working for DC, why DC doesn't come out with a science fiction type magazine of short stories. They have the talent there to do a good job.*

JOE ORLANDO: I think the question will be best answered by how Bill Gaines felt about science fiction as compared to horror commercially.

GAINES: Oh, yes. Of course, our science fiction books lost money. That's a very important point which I neglected to mention. The horror and the crime books were supporting the science fiction. This was true for at least the last half of the life of the science fiction books. We were actually losing money on them, and we published them merely because we loved them. And we always worked that way at EC. If we were making money over all, that was OK. We *were* making money and always did make money with our five crime and horror titles, and they supported the two science fiction and Harvey's war titles for a bit because those four were losing. And even *Mad*, the first three issues lost. But we always looked at the overall picture. We didn't worry about each specific magazine, because we published to a large extent because we loved what we were publishing.

QUESTION: *If you were still going today, would you still keep up the science fiction and the war books even though they were losing money?*

GAINES: If I were still publishing something that was making money, yes.

QUESTION: *You* are *publishing . . . [Laughter.]*

GAINES: Sure. You're beautifully working me into a corner. *[Laughter.]* But that's presupposing there's no Code. I have always said, and I said for 20 years, I will never work under that Code again. I spent one year under that Code and what it did to my stomach I don't want repeated. It was a *very* difficult year.

QUESTION: *What do you think of Dr. Wertham?*

GAINES: First of all, I heard a rumor that he died, and if he died I don't want to say anything. And if he didn't die, then he's sick! *[Laughter.]* But if he's healthy, I'll answer your question. I'm sure that Wertham basically believes what he said. Basically, I think because he was making a good living out of it . . . you know, sometimes you can color your own beliefs because you're making a living out of it, and perhaps Wertham was doing that. Certainly I caught him in a couple of little dishonest tricks where he was obviously lying, and I can't believe he didn't know it. But I think that perhaps he felt that the lies were for the general good over all. Wertham, remember, was on the side of the children. You would frequently find him testifying for the defense; if some kid were picked up for a crime, and the prosecution was trying to send this kid away to God-knows-what-for-how-long, it was Wertham you would frequently find testifying for the child. And his position would be; well, it wasn't the kid's fault because this or that environmental factor has to be taken into consideration. And among the environmental factors that he felt were doing these things to the kid he was trying to defend, he singled out comic books. So, in a way, while we all despise what he did to comic books, you could say that perhaps he was doing it for a good cause, in another sense. It's all water under the bridge at this point.

QUESTION: *Yesterday Mr. Feldstein went into some detail about how you plotted a story and laid it out on the board for the artist. I'd like to hear from each of the artists, especially about the Bradbury stories, what they did, had they read the story beforehand, and what background material they used to get their concepts.*

ORLANDO: I usually didn't read the story before. Only after I drew the story and liked it, I looked it up in the prose form and read it, and said, "Wow, that's a great story!" I feel . . . possibly I was very busy, and the other thing was that it probably would have scared the hell out of me if I read it in prose. It would have stopped me cold, perhaps for a couple of weeks, before I got the courage to draw the story. But I usually got all the background material from Al. He would tell me what he thought he would like to see in the pictures and the continuity. And I drew from my own background, you know . . . what I would like to put in.

WOOD: Let's see, I'm trying to remember. I think mostly it was the other way around; I *had* read those stories some time before. And I must say they were very good adaptations. The story was all there; there were less words. It got the feeling, and it translated very well into comics. Where did I get my concepts? That's quite a question, like "How do you draw pictures?" It would suggest something to me. I did a lot of research for that story "There Will Come Soft Rains," everything that looked remotely like futuristic settings. I probably worked harder on that story than anything I ever did.

AL WILLIAMSON: I just tackled the thing like I would Al's scripts. They were very easy to do. He would go over the story with me. I'd come in to deliver a job, and he'd have a new one ready for me. And we'd sit down for about half an hour, I'd read it, then we would go over it together. He would suggest something that wasn't in the captions. But I never read Bradbury's stuff; I only read the things that Al Feldstein had adapted. I found it very easy to work with, no trouble.

QUESTION: *Did you visit the High School of Industrial Arts during the fifties?*

GAINES: Yes, the whole staff went up there once—at least once.

QUESTION: *I go to the school now, and I heard that everyone showed up in limousines and beautiful clothes and everything, and then Al Williamson came running out in a jacket and a hero sandwich under his arm. [Laughter.]*

GAINES: Well, not substantially. *[Laughter.]* First of all, I don't think any of us ever owned a limousine. And if you did own a limousine, unless it was a chauffeur-driven limousine, you wouldn't take it to the School of Industrial Arts because you couldn't park it. So we probably all got there in taxis. This was like 20 years ago, and I'm sure the story over the years has grown and grown. What probably happened is that we all showed up with ties except Al who came in a T-shirt.

ORLANDO: I remember something about that that I'd like to point out.

WILLIAMSON: Thank you, Joe. *[Laughter.]*

ORLANDO: Al didn't go to that school, and I did. I knew the principal Kenny, and after it was all over he came to me, and he said, "He's a terrific artist"—because he did the best drawings—"but *why did he wear those blue jeans—and without a tie?*"

VOICE: And the boots.

ORLANDO: And the boots. You see, he was the first hippie around. And now that everybody's wearing blue jeans, he's gotten very conservative.

GAINES: *[Laughs.]* That's funny. That's probably what happened, Al always wore blue jeans, and we got used to him in blue jeans. But of course Joe is right; 20 years ago nobody wore blue jeans but Williamson. You didn't see anybody in New York going around in blue jeans; that was strictly farm attire. Even I, who was the biggest slob in New York, didn't wear blue jeans. *[Laughter.]* I wore clothes which didn't fit, which I still do. But Williamson was really the first genuine hippie, I think, that I ever saw.

ORLANDO: And Roy Krenkel with his sneakers.

GAINES: That's right. Roy Krenkel always wore white low sneakers.

ORLANDO: Whether there was snow . . . *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: But that's because Krenkel was Williamson's friend, so it figured. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *I'd like to know how long it took Wally Wood to draw each panel; the time involved on the larger panels.*

GAINES: I'm going to let Wally answer that, but I'll tell you it didn't take him very long. Wally was one of our very fast artists. Joe was, I would say, normal. Al was very slow—because he never worked. When he worked, he probably worked reasonably quickly, but he was playing baseball three-quarters of the time. Now you can answer the question. *[Laughs.]*

WILLIAMSON: I didn't play baseball.

GAINES: What did you play?

WILLIAMSON: I used to go to movies.

GAINES: Oh, all right. That's better.

ORLANDO: He was a Buster Crabbe watcher. *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: When he was twenty, he switched to girls. *[Laughter.]*

WOOD: About how long it took, I can only give you an average, but I figured it out once. I did a page a day for years. Sometimes I could spend a whole day on a panel; other times I could do a couple of pages in a day. It worked out to about a page a day.

GAINES: From my point of view, seeing the way the different boys worked . . . As a rule of thumb, it took what I called a "standard speed" artist like Joe two weeks to do a seven page story. It would take Wally one week. It would take Jack Davis three days. If he were pressed, he could do it in two days. Williamson could take three or four weeks, but, as I say, really, because he didn't work very hard.

Photo: Roger Hill

WILLIAMSON: Actually, I didn't do as much work as the others. Most of my work was in the science fiction books. I had a longer deadline; I didn't do . . .

GAINES: Well, you didn't do a lot of work because there was no *time* for you to do it, Al.

WILLIAMSON: I didn't want to do it.

GAINES: Oh, yeah, sure. *[Laughter.]* I wasn't clear if you wanted it.

WILLIAMSON: I just wanted to do science fiction. I had you snowed.

ORLANDO: I think that's an important factor for an artist: the rate of his speed determines the amount of income he's going to make. It's always a fight between quality and speed, and if you have the peculiar asset of being fast and good, you are going to make a lot of money. And if you're just average speed, you're going to make a living. And if you're very slow, you become a dilettante.

GAINES: I love the way you put things.

WILLIAMSON: What did he say?

GAINES: That's why I love it. I don't know either.

QUESTION: *I'd like to ask Al Williamson if he used any real female models the way he used Stewart Granger and Buster Crabbe for male models.*

WILLIAMSON: A couple of times I used models for stories. I liked using movie actors; I used Stewart Granger in a couple of jobs and, let's see . . . Buster, of course. The work I do *now*, I like to use real people in the strip. I use all my friends, naturally. I think I drew, or tried to draw, Liz Taylor once. I think that's the only time I used a movie actress in a comic.

QUESTION: *Didn't you use Marilyn Monroe once?*

WILLIAMSON: No. I think Frank Frazetta did.

QUESTION: *Mr. Williamson, I'd be interested in the reasoning behind your use of so many collaborators.*

WILLIAMSON: Well, Frank and Roy and Ange Torres, we're all good friends. And I enjoyed drawing figures very much; I didn't like drawing backgrounds. And I was deathly afraid of the brush; I was afraid that I'd botch up the inking with the brush. It sounds like they did all the work, the inking. Frank, I think, inked roughly about two or three jobs for me, and I pencilled them. Roy Krenkel pencilled the backgrounds and I inked those. But one of the main reasons, I guess, that I

Awards were given at the convention, based on the votes of those who attended. Since more EC conventions were planned, awards were presented only in horror and science fiction categories. The best horror artwork in an individual story was awarded to Graham Ingels for "Horror We, How's Bayou," and Ingels also won the best overall horror artist award. Bill Gaines accepted the awards for Ingels, and later posed with them (above). Best script for a horror story went to "Blind Alleys," by Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein, accepted by George Evans (below, left) who illustrated the story. Best artwork for an individual science fiction story was won by Al Williamson (accepting, below, center) and Roy Krenkel for their work on "Food for Thought" "Judgment Day," written by Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein, captured best science fiction script, and the award was accepted by the story's artist, Joe Orlando (below, right). Wally Wood received the award for best overall science fiction artist.

worked with them was that we had a hell of a lot of fun. We'd get together, and we *enjoyed* working on the stories. We had a lot of fun, creating a panel, drawing a figure, putting a figure in a Roy Krenkel background, and, you know, creating something together. We enjoyed it very very much, and it was really a very happy time. It wasn't a case of . . . a couple of times it was deadlines, I had to get a job in, but it was mostly for the friendship that we had. We enjoyed each other's company and we worked together. We just liked it. It was just *fun*; that was really the main reason. I worked with Wally a couple of times, and it was the same thing. It was always a lot of fun to work with someone; I hated to work alone. It was just . . . nobody to talk to, and yecch, you know. It's really a drag to sit there and try to draw these pictures all by yourself. It's tough. It's much more fun when you have someone to work with. Of course, now I'm married and I've got responsibilities so I've got to turn the work out, so I sit down and do it myself. But in those days it was just fun. It was nothing, you know, just a lot of fun. I hope that answers your question.

GAINES: I think it was in part too, that in those days Al was very young. He was our youngest artist. I think he was eleven. *[Laughter.]* Well, he acted eleven. And I think it was just a lack of confidence in his ability . . .

WILLIAMSON: Gee, thanks a lot, Bill.

GAINES: I'm not saying anything bad. You had the ability; you just didn't know it. As the years have gone on, he's become surer and surer of himself, until he is now probably the most conceited son of a bitch . . . *[Laughter, applause.]*

WILLIAMSON: I'll never work for *you* again, I'll tell you that! *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *Mr. Wood, you commented before about how much time you devoted to "There Will Come Soft Rains." Did you devote an equal amount of time to creating that period* circa *1905 for the Bradbury story "Mars is Heaven"* [Weird Science *# 18], where they find themselves in their childhood town—I believe it's Green Bluff, Illinois—and it turns out the Martians have created the town?*

WOOD: Yes. *[Laughter.]* Yes, I did a fair amount of research on that.

QUESTION: *An equal amount?*

WOOD: It's impossible to say. I wanted it to have that period look of that time, you know, the decorating . . .

GAINES: Incidentally, I should mention at this point, if I didn't in the horror panel, that Bradbury was wild about these stories. He was really very happy with them. He's an old comic strip buff from way back, which is one of the reasons that he allowed us to do them as cheaply as he did—or at all. And he just thought that Feldstein's adaptations were priceless, and the artwork . . . every new one he saw he just kept raving about them.

With one exception. I don't know if . . . you surely must have noticed; we used exclamation points for periods. This was something that came out of comic book writing, but we did it, I think, far beyond any other comic house, and it got to the point where there was no such thing, literally, as a period in an EC comic. Periods were exclamation points. We called them "bangs." You know, "The man came down the road, Bang. What did he want? Question mark. He wanted to rape six women. Bang, bang." *[Laughter.]* Sorry about that. Bradbury couldn't stand those bangs. And somewhere along the line, you may notice that the bangs disappeared from Bradbury's stories. The latest stuff didn't have it because he never could get used to it. All our readers were used to it. We were used to it; we were so used to it we didn't notice it. If we'd read it in any other place we would have thought they were out of their minds with all those exclamation points. But in our own stuff we adjusted to it and so did our readers, but not Bradbury. And that was the only criticism he had, but he loved the art.

Somebody from way back, way way back. There's nobody way back? Aw, the hell with it.

QUESTION: *Why didn't you use other science fiction writers, like Asimov or Anderson?*

GAINES: I don't know. I really don't know. We did later on. I think Joe did a bunch of "I, Robot" stories by Otto Binder, Eando Binder. But we just never got into it. For one thing, we couldn't afford to pay them what the stories were worth. Bradbury did it almost as charity. And Otto Binder, who was half of the Eando Binder team which were brothers, "E and O" Binder, he let us do it pretty cheap too, because he was a comic book writer.

QUESTION: *You said you would never work under the Code. How come you don't work outside the Code? With* Mad *turned into a magazine, how come you just didn't turn the rest of EC into magazines?*

GAINES: We did. We turned them into four Picto-Fiction books which sold about 20% and completely wiped us out, short of the bankruptcy of our distributor, which came along shortly thereafter and *really* wiped us out. We lost maybe our last $60-$70-$80,000 trying to do just what you suggested. And when that happens to you, you kind of don't want to try it again.

QUESTION: *Why didn't you switch distributors when you were having such hard times?*

GAINES: You don't switch distributors that easily. First of

George Evans and Joe Orlando sign autographs.

all, when you publish, you sell your entire output, 100% of your copies of each issue, to your distributor. You actually sell it to him, and he pays you a tiny part of the money that's due you. Then the magazine goes on sale, let's say for two months, and then it comes off sale, for let's say six months, and at that point you get the rest of your money. You've waited eight months, and meanwhile you've put out all the other issues in that period and he's got that money too. Now you can imagine . . . you suddenly say to him one day, you're leaving. What do you think he does? He doesn't give you any more money. And what do you publish with when you go to your new distributor? Actually, one of the best things that ever happened to me was my distributor going bankrupt. I would never have gotten away from him otherwise. And a lot of the smaller publishers today are in that position. If you're not very wealthy, once the distributor gets you, you don't get away so easy. And the other thing is, another distributor may not want you. And no other distributor wanted me in those days.

QUESTION: *You mentioned "Judgment Day" a while back. Would you tell us about the hassle you had with the Comics Code about that?*

GAINES: That was a very simple hassle. When we sent the Torres story where the guy had three eyes to the Code for approval—they didn't know it, but it was the last comic they'd ever get from us—they turned it down. So we sent out "Judgment Day" to replace it because we didn't have time to do a new story, nor did I want to waste the money. Now this brings us to the latest issue of *The Monster Times [# 10]*, which they were kind enough to devote to EC, but which has about 400 errors of fact. *[Laughter.]* I don't object to it, except that it's going to mislead everybody. One of the errors of fact is that according to *The Monster Times* the Code turned down "Judgment Day" because they wanted the spaceman not to be a Negro. That is simply not true. Knowing the Code, that I could have understood. What they objected to, which I couldn't understand, was the beads of perspiration on the Negro's forehead. This was to them a very distasteful thing. I refused to remove it, and it became a *cause celebre* for a little while. I threatened to take it to the Supreme Court, and they relented and the story was printed. Then I sent them a letter and told them to go screw, and I still owe them a lot of money which I never paid them. *[Laughs.]*

QUESTION: *Why did the Code make such a big stink about it?*

GAINES: Ask them; ask the Code. I don't know.

ORLANDO: I think the Code assumed that perspiration was gross and shouldn't be shown publicly. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *This may not be correct, but I understand that you interested Bradbury in your adaptations by doing a few without his knowledge beforehand.*

GAINES: That's the nicest way I've ever heard it put. *[Laughter.]* You should go into the diplomatic service; they need you in Washington. We *swiped* a few Bradbury stories, and he caught us! *[Laughs.]* But he was a real gentleman and wrote us a very nice letter suggesting that we had forgotten to pay him his royalty.

QUESTION: *One of my favorite stories is "Home to Stay" [*Weird Fantasy *# 13], and the beginning and the end of that is based on "Kaleidoscope." Was that one of the . . .*

GAINES: That's one of the two stories we swiped and put into one.

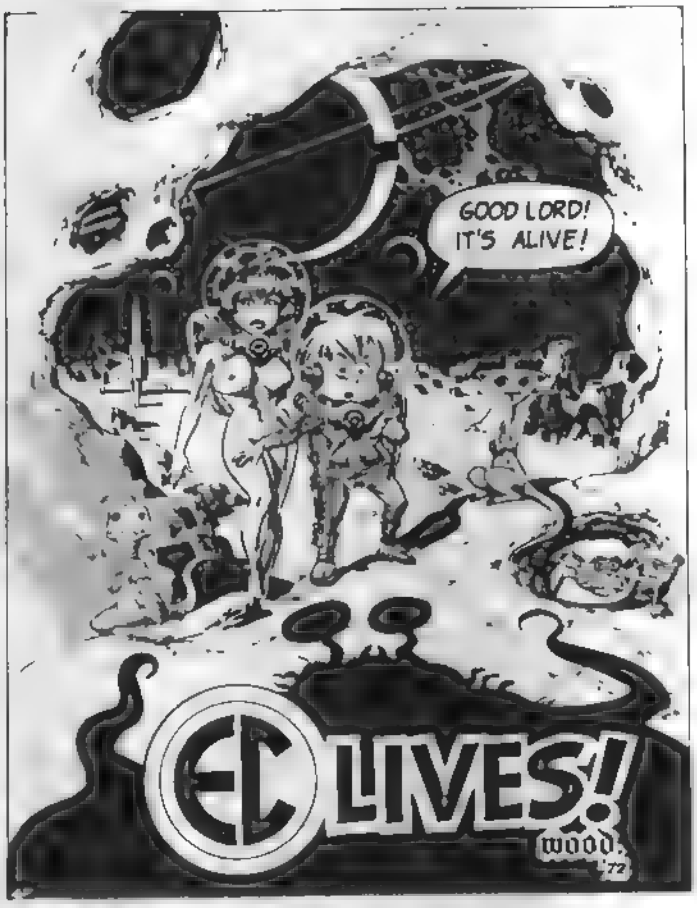
QUESTION: *What was the second one?*

GAINES: I don't remember.

VOICE: *"The Rocket Man."*

GAINES: OK, good. Somebody write those down and give them to me sometime. I never know. Write down the three names, seriously, because I'm always telling this story and I don't know what I'm talking about. We took two Bradbury's, we put them together, and made a story which Bradbury himself admitted was better than the two originals, but he didn't feel it was so good that we shouldn't pay him. *[Laughter.]*

You know, in the early EC days we used to lift a lot of springboards because before we got to the point where we could do our own plotting we were lifting plots that we remembered from things that we had read read many years before in the pulps, never dreaming that anybody would ever recognize them. I remember the very first story in *Weird Science # 12*, which was the first science fiction issue we ever published. It was called "Lost in the Microcosm," and I believe Kurtzman drew it. I lifted it from something I remembered 20 years earlier, when I was like a ten year old kid, that I'd read in *Amazing* or *Astounding Stories*. How the hell did I know that I was lifting a classic that everybody in science fiction knows as "He Who Shrank"? *[Laughs.]* But no one ever called us on it, strangely enough . . . or I guess just nobody ever cared.



EC Lives!, a giant 92 page program book (with no ads) was free to convention members who registered in advance. It featured full page caricatures of the EC artists by Marie Severin, comments by the artists about their fellow artists, and reprints of several EC stories.

QUESTION: *Who was the comic artist that attacked his wife with a hammer? I think he murdered her.*

GAINES: You mean in real life?

VOICE: I think it was Bob Wood.

GAINES: Yes, wasn't that one of the Biro-Wood team?

WOOD: Yes. Actually, it was his girl friend, and he beat her to death with a bottle.

GAINES: Well, that was close. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *Well, what was the outcome? What happened to Wood?*

WOOD: He went to prison, and, almost instantly, as soon as he was released from prison, walked in front of a truck.

GAINES: New kind of question. Yes.

QUESTION: *I want to ask Wally Wood which of the early science fiction stories he plotted; you know, like "The Enemies of the Colony" [*Weird Fantasy *# 8] and those early ones.*

WOOD: Let's see, I wrote the first one—"Dark Side of the Moon" *[*Weird Fantasy *# 15, 1950]* was it? And one other, I can't remember. I did suggest the ideas for several of the stories which Al wrote. But Al did write most of them.

QUESTION: *Did you write "My World" [Weird Science # 22]?*

WOOD: No, I . . .

GAINES: Let me answer that one, Wally, because that's a beautiful story. Al and I used to do this story-a-day bit, and the way we did it was, we'd come in in the morning, and we'd sit down and I'd present a number of springboards for Al. It was like selling him on a story, actually. And I'd give him one after another until one struck his fancy, and then we'd plot it, and then he'd go in and write it. And I'd sit there getting a stomach ache until he came out with it, because sometimes he'd come bursting back in two hours later saying that he couldn't write it. Then we were in bad trouble because by now it would be one or two o'clock and we'd still have to come up with a story that day. So what had happened this day was I'd sold him on a lousy story; we just were out of good stories. And I just said, "Look, you've got to write it." I locked him in a closet somewhere, and two hours later he came bursting out, but he came bursting out with "My World," which is the most beautiful story he ever wrote, perhaps. It had nothing to do with the original story. After ten minutes he had decided the original story couldn't be written. Instead of coming in and giving me an ulcer, he just wrote this thing, and he wrote it with Wally in mind. Of course, Wally did the job with it that you all know, and it's become one of the finest stories ever.

Photo: Roger Hill

Roy G. Krenkel, a 'fringe' member of the EC staff, attended the convention but didn't appear on a panel.

WOOD: There's more to it than that though, Bill. Remember when I used to come in and give you lists of things that I wanted to draw?

GAINES: Yes. Did he incorporate all of that?

WOOD: Yes, that was . . .

GAINES: Oh, I didn't remember that.

WOOD: I wanted to have a space scene and an alien landscape, and a list of a thousand things. And Bill had just been collecting these for a while, and I think that was why this was a lousy story, the original thing he started with. He tried to put . . .

GAINES: Oh, you mean he started out to put all these things together into one plot? *[Laughs.]* I'd forgotten that part of it. That makes it even more charming.

QUESTION: *Wally, around the period of* Weird Science *# 12 your work was very complex, like "He Walked Among Us" [Weird Science # 13] and "There'll Be Some Changes Made" [Weird Science # 14]. Then, about a year later, when you got into "The Precious Years" [Weird Science # 19], your work seemed simpler, more angular, but still of good quality. Was that a conscious simplification on your part?*

WOOD: Yes, it was. Sometimes I would look back on a job after a couple of months or so and realize that it was cluttered as hell. And it was a real effort to simplify it and work out my design . . . which I've been doing ever since.

GAINES: I think everybody liked Wally's clutter. Wally is probably the one artist who could never get too busy because his busyness was beautiful.

QUESTION: *Since EC, Wally did only one science fiction story, for Warren, called "The Cosmic All" [Creepy # 38]. Do you have any more in mind?*

WOOD: No.

GAINES: You wouldn't believe it, but he's related to Gary Cooper. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *I'd like to ask about the special "Flying Saucer Report" [Weird Science-Fantasy # 26] you did, which was the only nonfiction effort you had in the s-f mags over the years, and especially how you took a stand, as I see it, that flying saucers had a great deal of validity. I wonder how you felt about this at the time when you were researching it, and also how you feel today about that project.*

GAINES: That's a very good question, and it's in line with what I said before; people believe sometimes what would be helpful to them to believe for their profession. Al and I were about 75% convinced that there were such things as flying saucers. We sure hoped there were. And, in the hope, I think it helped us to delude ourselves into thinking that they really existed. There was such a wealth of sightings and unexplained experiences, and quite a convincing case had been built up at that time for them. And just the whole idea that the Air Force was suppressing something was delightful anyway. *[Laughter.]* So even if it weren't true, we wished it were.

Donald Keyhoe was the basis of this; he had written a couple of books and a few articles on it. And we called him up and invited him to New York, and paid him a substantial fee, as I recall. He spent a whole day with us, and Al either taped it or took copious notes, I don't remember. Keyhoe loaned us a lot of material to back up what he said, and Feldstein wrote the entire thing out of this Keyhoe material. It cost us, oh, three-four-five hundred dollars, which was a *lot* of money for us to spend for a thing like that in those days. Of course, we split the art up among the artists, which added to the book. And then Frank Edwards, a radio commentator of the time who did believe in flying saucers and who wrote a best selling book on the subject, gave us a lot of publicity on his radio show which resulted in thousands and thousands of mail orders for this dime book. We were inundated. I remember it was a dreadful thing. I was sorry we'd ever gotten involved in it.

ORLANDO: I'm sorry you don't still believe in flying saucers. I think they're still coming. I think I particularly wanted flying saucers to be true because I envisioned many, many changes in our society once they landed. It would shake up our religious beliefs and our political beliefs. Fortunately, these changes did come about, but they didn't come from heaven.

QUESTION: *In regard to "He Walked Among Us," was there a lot of adverse reaction to that? I know there were some letters.*

GAINES: Yes. Not as much as you might think. We could slip a lot of stuff like that in because, you know, the people who hated our comics didn't really read them . . . fortunately. They were just kind of looking at pictures. There was nothing in that story, if you were just scanning it, that would catch your eye. The people who would have been horrified by it *would* have been—if they'd read it. But I don't recall having really any trouble with that. But this is an example of what I was saying. This is how you can use science fiction to make a point. You simply take your whole situation and transpose it to a different planet. In other words, if this were, in a sense, an attack on Christianity, and if we'd attacked Christianity, it would have made a lot more trouble; but we didn't. We'd take the whole thing and put it on another planet. And for those of you who don't know the story, instead of a crucifix people were wearing stretch-racks, because the person in this story who was analogous to Christ was not done away with on a

cross but was done away with on a stretch-rack. So we took the whole story of Christ and transposed it into another planet with stretch-racks. And nobody really seemed to care.

QUESTION: *The story doesn't really seem to me to be an attack on Christ . . .*

GAINES: No, it wasn't an attack on Christ. It was an attack on the hypocrisy of . . .

QUESTION: *You put it on another higher level, almost cosmic.*

GAINES: Yes. I've always said that if there were a Christ, and he did what he was supposed to have done, he must have been a very fine man. Whether there was a Christ and whether he did what he was supposed to have done, I have no way of knowing. But I'll say "if."

QUESTION: *I have a related question for Mr. Williamson. In your* Secret Agent Corrigan *strip, there seems to be an entire arsenal of guns, yet not one is fired. Yet you seem to have leeway on the type of females you draw. The Code seems to be relaxing faster on sex than on violence. You still can't show real blood, but the females now are allowed to wear torn dresses and blouses. So, which would you prefer to be changed, violence or sex?*

GAINES: That's a joke? *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *There's simply no violence at all in the strip. Yet the females that you draw, I would think, should get some letters.*

WILLIAMSON: Are you knocking it, or . . . *[Laughter.]*

GAINES: Are you friend or foe?

WILLIAMSON: Are you talking about the comic *book* Code?

QUESTION: *I know you're not under it, but as far as the syndicate . . .*

WILLIAMSON: They're *very* strict. And they've censored a lot of girls that I've drawn, unfortunately. They keep taking the belly buttons out. *[Laughter.]* They made me cover up a girl once because she was wearing a sort of tight fitting flesh-type outfit that was really a Ben-Day, but they had a heart attack and I had to take care of that. We've got to cool it on the violence because King Features distributes the strip to about 150 papers, and that's 150 editors they have to please. And you'd be surprised at the complaints they get. So they have to, really, exercise a certain amount of—what's the word?

VOICE: Discretion.

WILLIAMSON: Discretion, thank you. And frankly it's a pity, because I'd like to see a little more, not so much violence, but a little more action in the story. Does that answer your question? OK.

QUESTION: *A question to all the artists. What was the hardest strip you had to do in the days back then?*

GAINES: That kind of question is very difficult. It's like asking, "What's your favorite story?" When you work on dozens and dozens of stories, it all blends into a blur so that you can't really pick one out. I can never answer that question. You love them all to one degree or another. And "the hardest" is probably the same way.

ORLANDO: I think it depends on your physical condition. If you've been out boozing the night before . . . *[Laughter.]* Or you were genuinely ill. Or sometimes you were bored. Boredom is one of the factors that you have to . . . of doing the same thing over and over and over again. *Now*, it's exciting looking back at it. But when you're doing it every day, and you find yourself repeating yourself, you find yourself continually criticizing yourself, there comes a time when you want to draw back and *not* draw. And you go on a sabbatical. Then you don't make your deadline, and you come up with all kinds of excuses, like you were ill . . .

QUESTION: *Did Harry Harrison work for you at all?*

GAINES: Very early, Harrison used to do a little work. He did a little work with Wally for a while. There was this combination of Harrison and Wood, and I didn't know who did what. When they broke up, all of a sudden Harrison's artwork wasn't very good any more. *[Laughs.]* And I found out who did what.

QUESTION: *How did you take the readers' reactions to the Bradbury stories? You asked readers to send in their opinions, and the majority said they could take them or leave them. The smallest group said that they really liked them, and the largest group said they didn't like them at all.*

GAINES: Yes. Well, I never believed in a democracy. *[Laughter.]*

QUESTION: *After the Code first started, you tried to go within the Code, but still certain retailers wouldn't carry ECs because they had a bad name. So how come* Mad *kept going?*

GAINES: Because, fortunately, we had changed *Mad* from a 10¢ color comic to a 25¢ black-and-white, different size, typeset magazine. We did not do it to avoid the Code, as has sometimes been speculated; we did it for other reasons, but the result was that we *did* avoid the Code. And that was the luckiest thing that ever happened to us. *Mad* could never have gotten through the Code. In fact, *Panic* couldn't, and died.

QUESTION: *What formula did you use in the balloons. I notice every couple of words were in capital letters. Was that to make it more visually exciting?*

GAINES: Yes. Well, no, that was part of our "bang bang" device which I didn't mention. We also never used dashes. We used three dots; we used a lot of three dots. We had our own kind of punctuation system. You may remember that Al and I came up with this theory which we still kind of believe: that you can think of comics as a kind of stage where the panel line is the proscenium arch, the scriptwriter is the playright, and

Bill Gaines, Joe Orlando, Wally Wood, Al Williamson.

the artist is the set designer and all the actors. The lines in ECs are written to be spoken aloud, and, actually, whenever I edited the final written story, Feldstein and I would sit there and I would read it aloud, and sometimes we would make changes just because we didn't like the way it sounded. And as part of reading it aloud, we underlined the words we wanted emphasized. An underlined word meant to the letterer to italicize it and make it slightly larger in heavy type. As you looked at an EC comic, a heavy word meant emphasize this. "We were going *around* the corner, and then the car struck us. It was *terrible.*" Bang, bang, bang. And so on.

QUESTION: *There's a story that Al illustrated about these reptilian sort of aliens who land on this chunk of the Earth and discover a comic book in the rubble. As they read the comic book it becomes apparent that it's about them, until on the final page it's like it keeps going in. It's an interesting device. Can you tell me something about the background of that particular story?*

GAINES: Was that "By George"?

VOICES: *"The Aliens" [*Weird Fantasy *# 17].*

GAINES: That's just something Al and I dreamed up one day when we couldn't come up with anything else. No particular background.

QUESTION: *That story is a good representation of another aspect of science fiction. You mentioned the fact that you could emphasize social points with science fiction. This story demonstrated that you could get into conceptual ideas where you begin to question your own ideas about time and so forth. I just wondered, how much of this kind of stuff would you guys talk about?*

GAINES: We had a lot of fun with that. Al and I were always in theoretical discussions about mobius strips and time loops and klein bottles—that's a bottle that doesn't have an inside or an outside but only one side. Al actually drew me a klein bottle once from my description of one, which I've still got. Time stories were, I think, our favorites, and we came up with every conceivable variation on a time story. And I'm proud . . . there's one that was completely original. It was my idea, and I've never seen it anywhere else, or anything close to it. That's where the guy goes back in time and becomes his own father.

QUESTION: *Robert Heinlein wrote a story . . .*

GAINES: Heinlein did it? God damn!

QUESTION: *. . . where he's his own mother and his own father.*

GAINES: His own mother *and* his own father?

QUESTION: *He had an operation and became a man. Then he went back in time and raped himself.*

GAINES: I'm *crushed! [Laughs.]* Well, if anybody could beat that story, it would be Heinlein. *[Laughs.]* Holy good Moses.

QUESTION: *I think he did it after you.*

GAINES: Oh, he did it after me? Thank God. That's all right, he's entitled.

QUESTION: *Who thought up "spa fon" and "squa tront"?*

GAINES: Those were Al's. Well, of course, "spa fon" is a little bit of Italian. What's the expression, "spa-fon gool"? *[Laughter.]* I think that's where it came from, because Al didn't know it was wrong. The "squa tront" he just made up.

QUESTION: *When you did a Bradbury story, did you ever confer with the author?*

GAINES: No. No, Bradbury was in California and we never conferred with him.

QUESTION: *How do the artists appraise their work after 20 years? When they originally did it, did they consider themselves illustrators or artists?*

ORLANDO: Well, I don't think I would do it again. It was just too much work. I don't think we could buy that kind of work again. Working now as an editor, I find very few young artists willing to put themselves on the line that much. We did it because . . . I did it because I loved it. It was my way to express myself and to do artwork at the same time.

I'd like to take this opportunity to express the gratitude I feel towards Wally Wood for the amount of help he gave me when I first started. When I met Wally I really wanted to be a western illustrator. I wanted to draw for the western pulps; and when I went out and found out what they paid I realized I didn't love it that much. *[Laughter.]* Then I met Wally. He got me into science fiction, and he was a tremendous amount of help to me.

WOOD: Aw, shucks. *[Laughter.]* I don't know, I don't worry about words, like whether I'm an illustrator or a cartoonist or whatever. I'm an artist; I do it for a living. I don't make any great distinctions between fine art and commercial art either. After all, they sell those fine art paintings.

Looking back, I had fun. For the first five years of EC I was just having a ball. I would rather draw than eat, maybe. And I don't quite have that energy any more. That may be part of the reason why I've sort of simplified my style. I'd never get the stuff done today.

WILLIAMSON: What was the question? *[Laughter.]* I mean it, I've lost track. Oh, you mean the old EC stuff? Ah, well . . . *[sighs]* I think it's pretty awful, frankly. I think what really shows is that I really *loved* what I was doing. But as for the drawing, I think it's pretty bad, you know, it's no composition or anything like that; it's just a mishmosh of figures and, you know, it's just . . . *[sighs]* eh, you know. But I had fun doing it.

QUESTION: *What reference material did the artists use to show rotting bodies and decapitated heads and so on?*

GAINES: We never did things like that! What are you talking about? Most of these guys didn't use swipe files. For stuff like that they just made it up. Are there any questions from any girls? Anyone over 65? Anyone under eight? Oh, well.

QUESTION: *How many early stories were written by Harrison, and how much at EC was done by outside writers?*

GAINES: In the very early years of the New Trend, Harrison did a little bit, and Wally I guess did a little bit, and perhaps some outside scriptwriters who I can barely remember did a little bit, but when we got into our stride, there were only three scriptwriters. Al and I plotted, and Al wrote the bulk of it. Johnny and I plotted, and Johnny wrote mostly what Johnny drew, but a couple of other things, like Johnny wrote "Pipe Dream" *[*Vault of Horror *# 36],* and Johnny wrote "Shoe Button Eyes" *[*Vault of Horror *# 35].* We plotted them, and Johnny wrote them, and other artists developed them. But basically, Johnny only wrote what he drew. Harvey, after doing a few stories that Al wrote, and even very early stories that an outside writer like Ivan Klapper, to spring a new name on you, wrote, started writing on his own. And then, from that point on, Harvey wrote everything he ever drew, and then he wrote everything he ever edited. And that's about it, except towards the end of EC. Towards the end of the New Trends and into the New Directions, Al and I got tired, and we called in outside scriptwriters to help us. Jack Oleck and Carl Wessler, both of whom are working for DC now, in those days did some very fine horror and crime stuff for us. And then when we got into the New Directions, we had Jack Bernstein and Irving Werstein, who became a novelist and who died a couple of years ago. And one other whose name escapes me. That's about it. But basically, it was Al and Johnny and Harvey.

Transcribed by John Benson, Bhob Stewart, Bruce Hershenson and Ron Barlow. Edited for publication by John Benson. ■■

GOING STEADY WITH PEGGY

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CENTIPEDES!

EEEEEEEK!

EEEEEEEK!

SLAM

LETTERS

The best part of *Squa Tront* # 7 was the EC fanzines article, and I wish you would feature this every issue. Larry Stark was, and still is, a gifted writer. Please reprint more of his analysis of stories; they're really very good.

— Tom Stein
Norwalk, Conn.

In answer to your solicitation of comments on the fanzine reprints, I say: no more. The amount of space you are giving over to 20 year old article reprints from fanzines is overboard. You should just be picking out quotes and inserting them in your article series. You have now represented me, Stark and Armstrong, but the overriding effect (except for Stark) is certain to be (now and future) pure juvenilia—something that is very much out of place with the rest of the book. You should be cultivating *new* criticism.

— Bhob Stewart
Somerville, Mass.

Many thanks for the three issues of *Squa Tront*. I am very impressed with them. They are certainly beautifully gotten up and have interesting material. As for your inquiry about the fanzines: I'd very much like to help, but I have none of the titles you wanted. The only exception is *Potrzebie* # 1.

Being historically minded, you may be interested in this: *Potrzebie* # 1 was sent to me by Bob Stewart (now the same name except for an *h* after the *B*) in 1954. It came with a long letter from him from Texas. In his letter he was critical of *Seduction of the Innocent* and started with the very point you mention on page 36 of *Squa Tront* # 7; namely, that I wrote that there are no professional critics of comic books. His letter was critical, friendly and serious. He gave me credit for being against censorship. In reply I wrote him a nice letter and sent him some reprints of some of my articles on mass media.

I was interested in his letter in *Squa Tront* # 7, page 47. After all these years it fits very well with what he wrote me in 1954. Maybe by now he will have forgotten the whole episode. If you should see him please give him my best regards.

If you are interested in my current views about mass media the fanzine *Fandom Unlimited* # 2, edited by Randall Larson, 774 Vista Grande Avenue, Los Altos, Calif. 94022 [available for $2], has a long interview with me.

— Fredric Wertham, M.D.
Kempton, Pa.

Believe it or no, what I enjoyed most was the fanzine article, and I do hope that you will continue with this despite what others might say.

I am sure that most people identify you with journalism or writing; but from # 6 there has been a strong element of design with each issue. # 6 worked as a unit and # 7 is also clear in its sense of design. The big surprise to me about # 7, though, is that it's almost *too* visual. I would rather have more to read. I guess that's what I enjoyed most about # 6—there was such a wealth of information, and the articles helped to expand one's understanding of Krigstein. The letter from Kitchen in # 7 is a perfect example . . .

— Jerry Weist
Boston, Mass.

The best thing in the issue was the EC fanzine article. Most of us fans were not around back then to read all those fanzines. Your magazine lets us second generation EC fans know what EC fandom was like back in those early days.

I would like to see you run the following more reprints of those fanzines; covers of the pre-New Trends; more reprints of comics that were done by the EC gang for the public's good; more interviews; more previously unpublished artwork.

— John Hall
Los Angeles, Calif.

Note: When the fifties EC fanzines were flourishing, John Hall's father, Clod Hall, was a well known science fiction fan.

One thing I would like to see is more covers of the EC *horror* comics. These are my favorites.

— Jeff C. Langstaff
North Vancouver, Canada

I Don't Have Any time cause it's getting DARK and I got to go to Sleep My Dad says I Am Rich He's a Laywer oto there is something at the window

— Cap Easy
(address misplaced)

You certainly gave short shrift to a most valid point of Robert Parson's; mainly the dearth of attention given Al Feldstein in *Squa Tront*. I just made an unscientific survey of the EC zines in my collection and the amount of attention given Feldstein is amazingly small, especially when contrasted to such EC fringies as Krenkel and Frazetta. Paging through *Squa Tronts* past, it seems like the few mentions of Feldstein are as an artist and rarely as the writer/editor of more than half the EC line.

Another unsung EC hero (even more so than Feldstein) would have to be Ben Oda who did so much of the lettering on Kurtzman's comics, including those excellent story titles. Has anyone sought to interrogate this man?

He and Marie Severin are about the only EC employees still actively producing quality work for today's comic book business . . . which may say something about today's comic book business.

— Mark Evanier
Los Angeles, Calif.

If we could project ourselves back into those golden days of the fifties when EC was at its peak, there would be no way for us to know how close to dissolution it all was; we would naturally assume it would go on indefinitely. One could sense, just from reading EC, that comics were moving toward new horizons, entering a new dimension. We would assume that the EC artists would remain in narrative illustration, bringing higher standards of draftsmanship, mood, characterization and general excitement to the field.

Sadly, this didn't happen. The brief flash of the EC period ended and was never repeated. Perhaps that's why it is still so cherished.

Of course, I don't mean that the artists' careers didn't flourish; some of them have done very well indeed. But that first fine flush of promise was never met; the artists either

BILL GAINES EXPLAINS "GOING STEADY WITH PEGGY"

"This stuff is of interest because it's the very first thing that Feldstein did for EC. Al first showed up here at the suggestion of Jimmy Wroten, who did the mechanical lettering for *Wonder Woman* and for the EC comics. Al had been doing teenage stuff for Victor Fox and Fox wasn't paying him—he wasn't paying most people. So I started Al on a teenage, because that's what I had seen of his work. And we were going to call the story "Going Steady with Peggy." But then we heard from Chemical Engraving—I think that's who we were using then—that someone else had sent down a Peggy, and it was the unwritten rule that whoever got to the engraver first got the title. So I held up the book long enough to think up a new title, at which point we found that Fox's teenage books were doing poorly, so I shelved the whole project.

"Al was always a very tight penciller. In fact, for a little while we were actually printing from very tightly pencilled stuff that Al and Johnny Craig were turning out, in some of the earlier pre-Trend titles. The theory was that I was paying $13 for pencils and $10 for inks, and I made these guys an offer: I said, "Look, if you tighten up your pencils and I can shoot from them I'll give you $18 just for the pencils." They thought that was a good deal. It got them five bucks and saved me five bucks. We tried it for a while, but it was a little weak so we gave it up."

You'll be happy to learn that we're hard at work preparing an issue which will be devoted entirely to the work of John Severin!

abandoned the illustrated narrative, or their work was so changed in style or quality that it really doesn't compare to their EC output. With one exception, none of the former EC artists works consistently in comics today, and consistently turns out work which steadily improves in quality.

The exception, of course, is John Severin.

There is something especially heartening and appealing about an artist who not only continues to improve after more than twenty years, but who still works with subject matter comparable to the EC experience. Severin still does war comics, just as he did for Kurtzman; still does fantasy, just as he did for Feldstein; still does humor, just as he did for the early *Mad*. (And why hasn't "Varmint," that wild Western he did for *Mad* #1, been reprinted?)

In *Alter Ego* #10, Gil Kane said, "What Severin brought in was an understated force and power, and a kind of truth . . . there is a realism in what he does that makes everything else look like the difference between Matt Dillon and Roy Rogers. He really brings a tremendous force into the material; he recreates a place and a time with a feeling of accuracy . . . [In his war stories] there's a sense of people sweating, of people being terribly fatigued and made rawboned by war."

Kane's is the only significant critical appreciation I have read of Severin's work. I hope it won't be the last. There is little I can add, except to say that it's always a pleasure to see Severin's latest work. His sheer endurance is appealing, an endurance that is somehow suggested in the art itself. I hope that, years from now, Severin will still be doing new things; the technique more polished maybe, but the humanity as evident and the humor as sparkling.

— Robert Parsons
Nashville, Tenn.

What are my reactions to the EC artists, you ask? Welllll. . . .

Severin is a good illustrator and draftsman with a history buff's eye for detail, but why you include him in your pantheon is beyond me. True, Severin had a lot to do with the editing and writing of *The New Two-Fisted Tales*, which makes him technically an auteur, but do you really think Ruby Ed and Black Jack Slaughter, however well told and drawn their adventures are, have as much claim to one's attention as "The Catacombs" or ". . .And All Through the House" or "Mysterious Ray from Another Dimension" (just to mention a few)?

If I were making a list of EC favorites I would undoubtedly list Craig, Krigstein and Kurtzman (not in any special order) at the top. I guess my criterion for great art is depth of feeling and personal vision (as opposed to mere 'style'), and I don't think Severin has either, no matter how well he can draw or tell stories.

I will always be grateful to Wood and Williamson for the pleasure they gave me as a kid, but really . . . All those rocket ship interiors and space stations and alien monsters and arty figure poses and the rest: it's all great fun up to about the age of twelve, but it's not 'great art.' My general feeling about Williamson and his collaborators is that they got more and more pretentious as time wore on. I enjoy his earliest EC work, but I think "Food for Thought" is one of EC's worst stories—preposterously detailed and utterly meaningless artwork.

Sure I like Jack Kamen—an amiable unpretentious style. It's true he makes mistakes in his drawing, but he makes them in an elegant and likeable way. I like his spillover effects and his general decorative feel. He knows his limits. A nice feathery inking style—always reminded me a bit of H.C. Kiefer, a big favorite of mine. Kamen's one of the few EC artists who really felt at home in fifties settings, perfect for those great *Crime SuspenStories* 'unhappy marriage' yarns. Just an all round good grade B artist.

I would rank Davis and Ingels very high. They could both really draw, but were never arty; so good it was easy to take them for granted. Crandall and Evans; honest craftsmen. Their characters always looked slightly bewildered at being in the fifties, as if they couldn't quite believe the thirties and forties were over. Severin & Elder; so much better than either alone. I wish they had done more science fiction.

I'm glad *Squa Tront* gave us a chance to see Lucky fight it through, but I'll eat my EC T-shirt if anything with the word 'syphilis' in the lyrics was a "song favorite" in 1949, especially at campfire song-fests! Do you know who wrote the script? Even making allowances for the times, that bit about "woman's work" at the end is a real stomach-turner.

— William J. Mason
Montreal, Canada

Fourteen pages of Krenkel's henscratchings seems excessive. Surely five or six pages would have been more than sufficient to get the idea across. Most of the stuff looks more like rejects from *Weird Tales* than rejects from *Creepy* Nothing wrong with the pulp approach—except that here the romance ambiance seems to predominate over any atmosphere of Lovecraft or Poe. The sketch of the skeleton swathed in roses is more charming than terrifying; like the cover of a ladies' gothic novel.

I kind of enjoyed "Swipe File." As you say, spotting swipes is not a particularly constructive pastime; but it is fun. These are better than average in craftsmanship. The majority of those you'll find in the fifties—in those schlocky imitations of EC—were almost stunning in their ineptness. Unlike the general run of Alex Raymond swipes, for instance, where at least a vestige of professionalism remains, the EC lifts almost made the original look bad. The copy of Craig's cover is a good case in point. With such a perfect model to go by (or, more likely, trace), how could such a bum job result?

I guess the difference lies in the spirit in which the swiping is done. The guys who swiped from Raymond were enchanted with his technique. They wanted to enhance the look of their work. The guys who swiped from EC were probably just trying to fill pages. And since the pages of the books they were trying

to fill were horror comics, where else would they find an immediately accessible source?

I suppose after awhile they could have swiped from other crud titles. For all we know, they probably did. I doubt that anyone would ever have noticed the *Beware* swipe from the *Adventures into Darkness* cover had the patently obvious Davis copy not attracted attention to the book in the first place.

I didn't much care for the way in which the letter column was scattered through the book. I kept trying to follow it in the same way you would a discussion. And the way you arranged the letters, that was very much what it was like. But I found myself almost losing the continuity of thought being expressed in having to skip around to find where the piece picked up again.

Trying to place "Lucky Fights It Through" in context is fascinating. There were no notes or explanation as to its origin or intended audience. The subject would naturally lead one to suspect that it was prepared for distribution in the armed forces. But at the same time, the pseudo-Western setting and incredible dialogue (both of which would instantly alienate anyone considering himself 'grown') suggests that grammar school children were the most likely target.

The inclusion of lyrics (with music yet) also mitigates strongly against the armed forces theory.. Or is 1949 really further removed in time than I imagine? Somehow I can't conjure up a hall full of soldiers singing along as the chaplain accompanies them on the piano (after which, he passes out the rubbers).

— Landon Chesney
Chattanooga, Tenn.

My understanding is that "That Ignorant, Ignorant Cowboy" was actually, unbelievably, a popular song of sorts at the time. I'm sure the whole comic was written around the song, not the other way around. I've forgotten where I learned this, but I believe it was from someone who knew the song and was not familiar with the comic.

Squa Tront #8. Does it have the EC feeling? Is my name in it? —Gary Arlington
San Francisco, Calif.

The EC adaptations of the Bradbury stories, while wordy (they were, after all, crammed into six pages or so), are much more satisfying as adapted tales than the current adaptations of text pieces appearing in *Star Reach* and *Heavy Metal*—which aren't, in fact, comic adaptations but illustrated texts, as if the original text were holy and the comics format a demeaning of the original. It's kind of like making a film adaptation with a running narrative of the original story accompanied by silent footage.

—Charlie Swift
Lansdowne, Pa.

Come on awready! You did a whole issue on Krigstein in which you canonized him. Now I pick up the latest because of the great Krenkel stuff in it which I saw at my friends' collection, and you pick up the St. Bernie again. Genius, you say! Great individual style, you say! What a creative mind, you say. Always new and off the beaten track.

Well bullshit, man. Like some old gasser once said, Genius owes a hell of a debt to everyone who went before. And Bernie is no exception. Like Peter Max, he's conned the public into thinking he invented the wheel, artistically speaking. And you guys fall for it because you don't recognize what a wheel is. So while you interviewed him and determined that he is the only artist ever in comic-books who knows Sartre or whoever, you neglected to ascertain that he sure as hell knew Lyle Justis. To prove that point I enclose a couple of copies of Justis' beautiful pieces from "Treasure Island." And although Sartre may not know Justis either, let me tell you that this style of his is unashamedly derived from an earlier master named Daniel Vierge. And let me assure you that for art-quality, composition, quality of line, Bernie doesn't approach either.

Let it rest, friends, and get back to a *Squa Tront* that explores the field. Krenkel and Jack Davis's stuff redeemed the book. Only them.

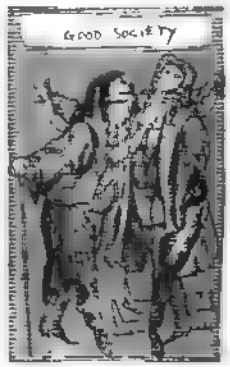
— Jacques Tyrell
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Krigstein is a good illustrator but not a unique one. His contribution to the art of comics—the pictorial narrative—is primarily what I respect about his work. Anyway, if you'll reread the interview you'll see that Krigstein credits many artists who have influenced him, and also that many of his influences are classic illustrators: Howard Pyle, Winslow Homer, Remington, Doré.

Judging from the samples you sent, Lyle Justis is certainly a fine illustrator, but quite honestly it seems that any similarities between his work and Krigstein's are those shared by all good illustrators. I don't suppose it would do any good to add that Krigstein never heard of Justis or saw his work.

Other mail has come in about Krigstein, mostly from those who wrote about him in last issue's letter page, but it does seem that the time has come to 'let it rest.'

Justis



Krigstein

I'm glad to see an article about a great artist who doesn't get very much attention: Jack Davis. I would like to see a more in-depth article on Mr. Davis' work. Also, more info on Al Williamson, and more EC lore. — Jim Wilson
Park Ridge, Ill.

I'd like to see more EC related items (storyboards, *interviews*, idea sketches, etc.)—especially Williamson oriented ones—rather than things like Davis' commercials, "Kurtzman on Sesame Street," etc. P.S. More Frazetta! Sean Burns
Roan Mountain, Tenn.

Your biggest mistake is the absence of "The Frazetta Collector." — Julio Rey
Miami, Fla.

I am sure there are a lot of Frazetta fans that would love to see "Came the Dawn," the story he did that was intended for a Picto-Fiction magazine. Also, I'd love to see you print some color EC covers.

(continued on pg. 62)

GREAT NEWS FOR EC FANS!

Squa Tront has always been in the strange position of being an EC fanzine for an audience which by and large probably has not read most of the nearly 300 New Trend and New Direction EC comics. At least, we'd guess that only a small portion of our approximately 4,000 readers has anything like a full set of EC's or even access to a set to read. Even your editor has only about three-quarters of them, many incomplete and falling apart.

Of course, the 12 East Coast comics reprints are still around, and about 70% of the *Mad* comics are in print. But even the other 90 odd EC stories that have been reprinted in recent years have been out of print and almost as hard to find as the originals. More than 80% of the EC's have *never* been reprinted, and are inaccessible to all but a few.

But now all this has changed! Russ Cochran has obtained the rights from Bill Gaines to reprint the entire EC collection in handsome matching volumes. The first of the series should be appearing approximately concurrently with this issue of *Squa Tront*. Cochran is the ideal person for the job. His past publications (especially the *EC Portfolios*) have been models of how reprints of classic material should be handled; tastefully, with knowledgeable care given to all details of production.

After considering all the alternatives, Cochran has come up with a format that should delight everyone and hopefully be more financially feasible than the East Coast reprints were. Cochran will be bringing out a *complete EC title* each time he goes to press.

The first release is the complete 22 issue run of *Weird Science* in four volumes, with a special slipcase when the books are purchased together. Each volume is 9x12 inches, bound with sewn signatures, with laminated full color hard covers. The stories are printed in black and white on high quality coated stock, shot from the original art of course. All 22 covers are reproduced in color. Original letter pages, house ads and texts will also be included

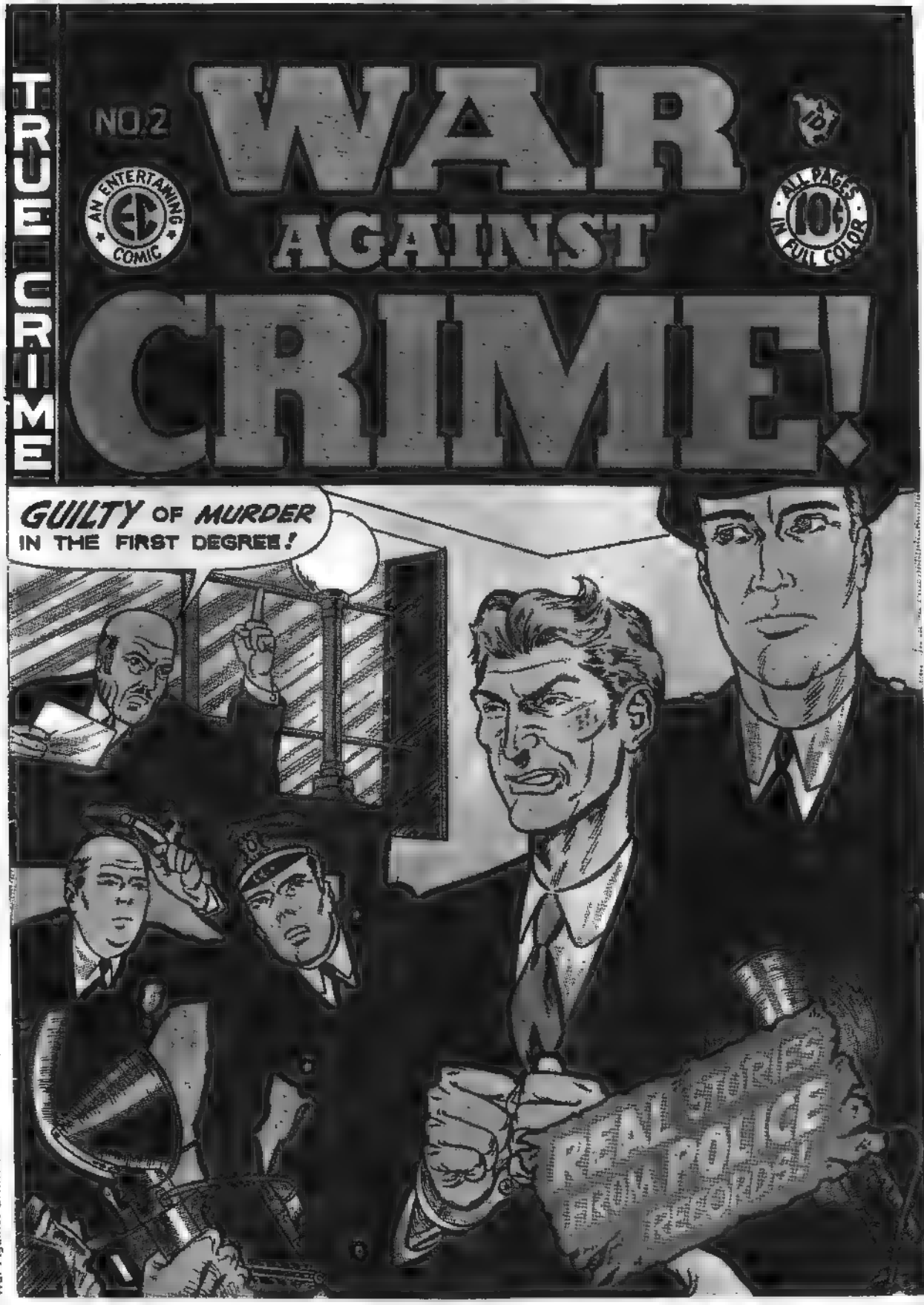
The best feature of these reprints is the price; the four volume set retails for less than the collectors' price of a single copy of one of the original comics. Cochran plans to bring out the entire series just as fast as his cash flow permits. Depending on how fast the first set sells, the entire series could possibly be printed in three years.

Before he's finished, Cochran plans to do everything' the New Direction comics, the Picto-Fiction magazines (including several unpublished stories), and the 3-D comics in 3-D (including the third issue, which had six layer depth and has never been published in 3-D). He has no plans to publish the pre-Trend comics unless there is a pressing demand for them. An exception to this is the four crime comics in which the Vault Keeper and the Crypt Keeper make appearances. These will be included in the appropriate horror volumes.

Squa Tront can't applaud Cochran's project enough. Anyone who likes *Squa Tront* should want to own these volumes. To get complete details on how to order, write to: Russ Cochran, Box 437, West Plains, Mo. 65775.

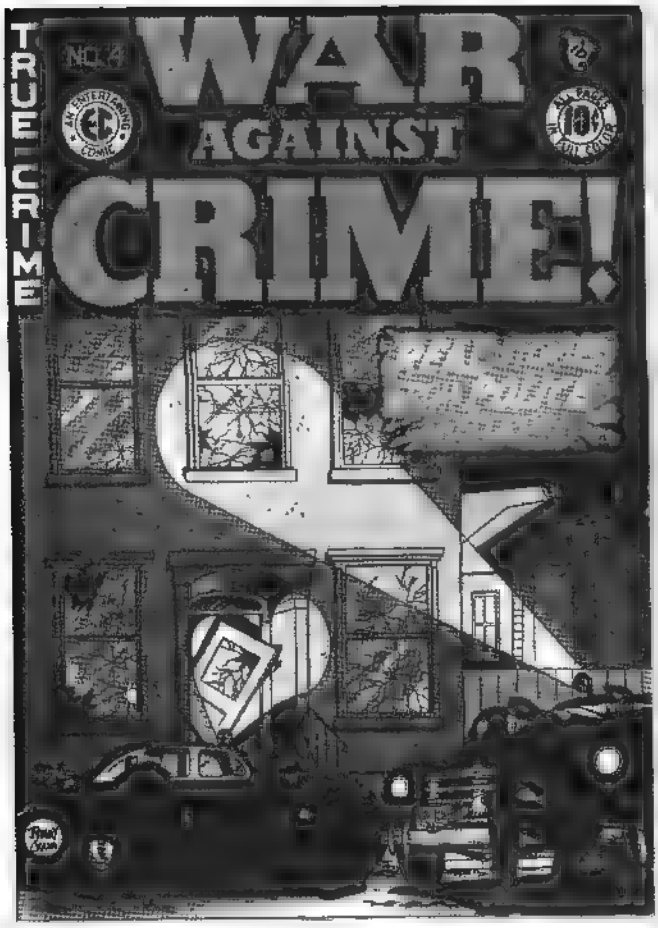
GEORGE DAWS

A GALLERY OF PRE-TREND COVERS



War Against Crime covers © 1948, 1949 L.L. Publishing Co., Inc.

BY JOHNNY CRAIG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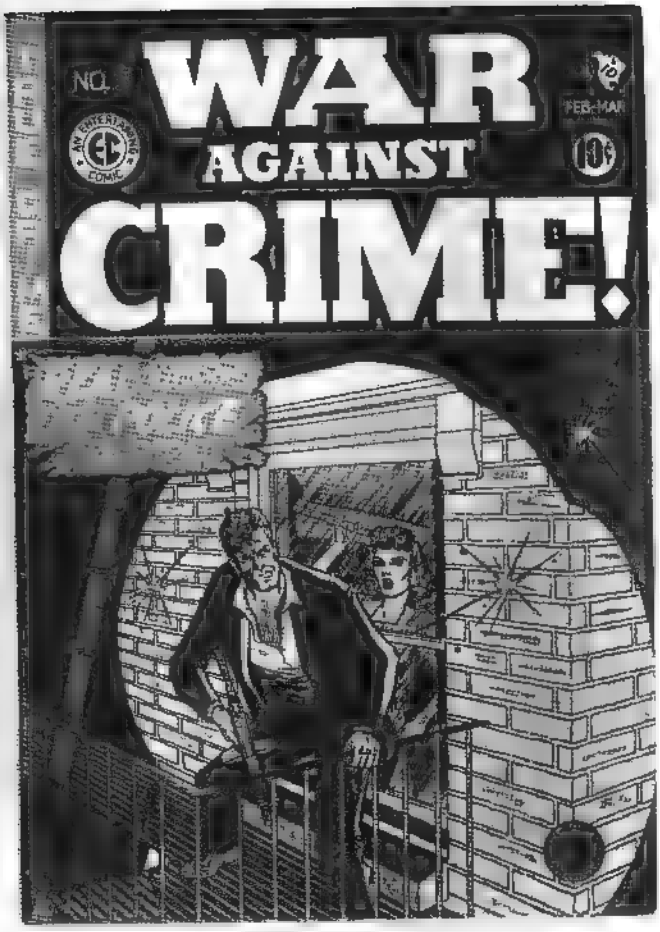
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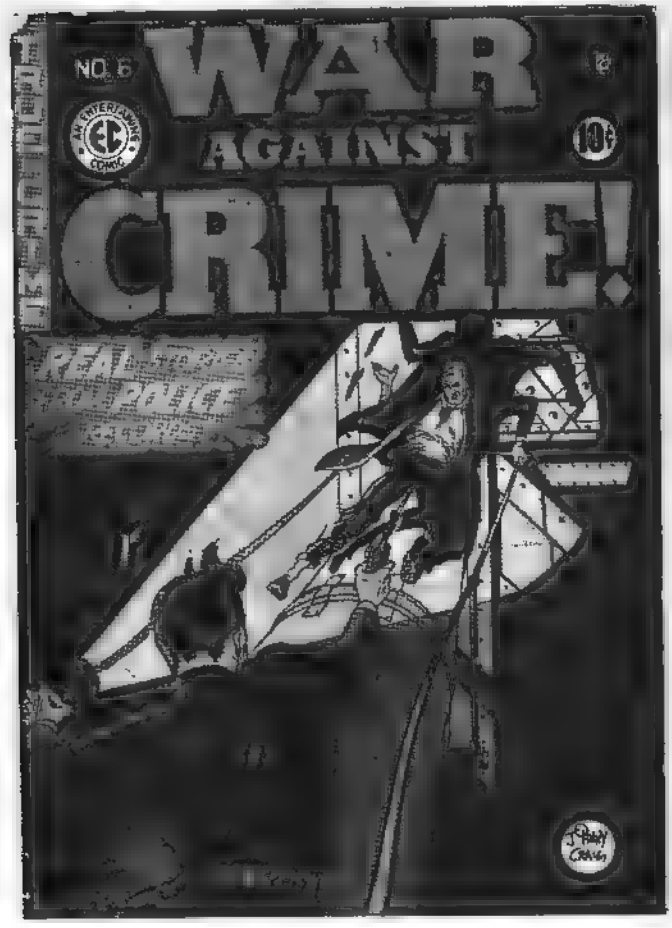
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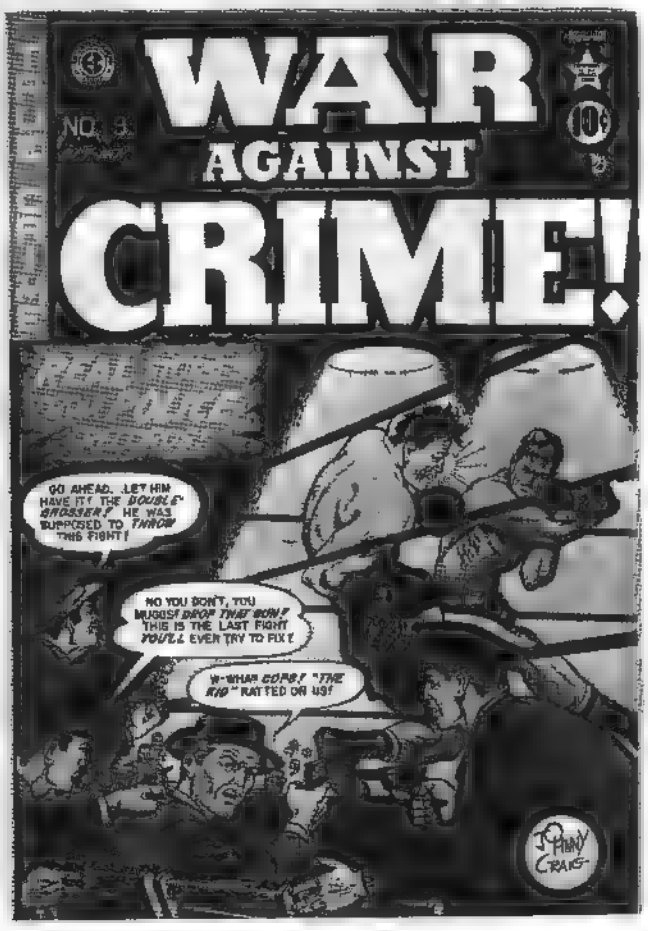
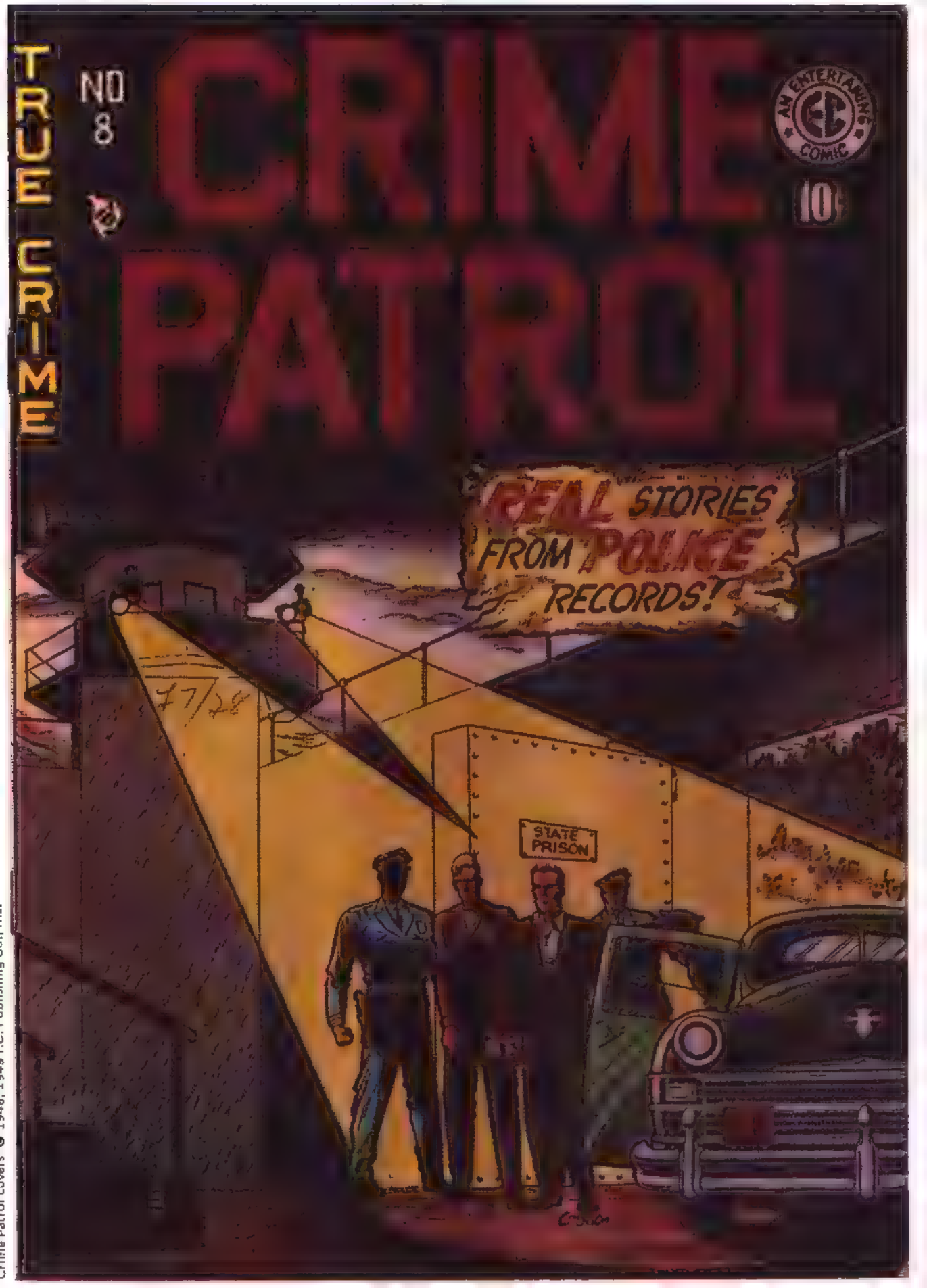
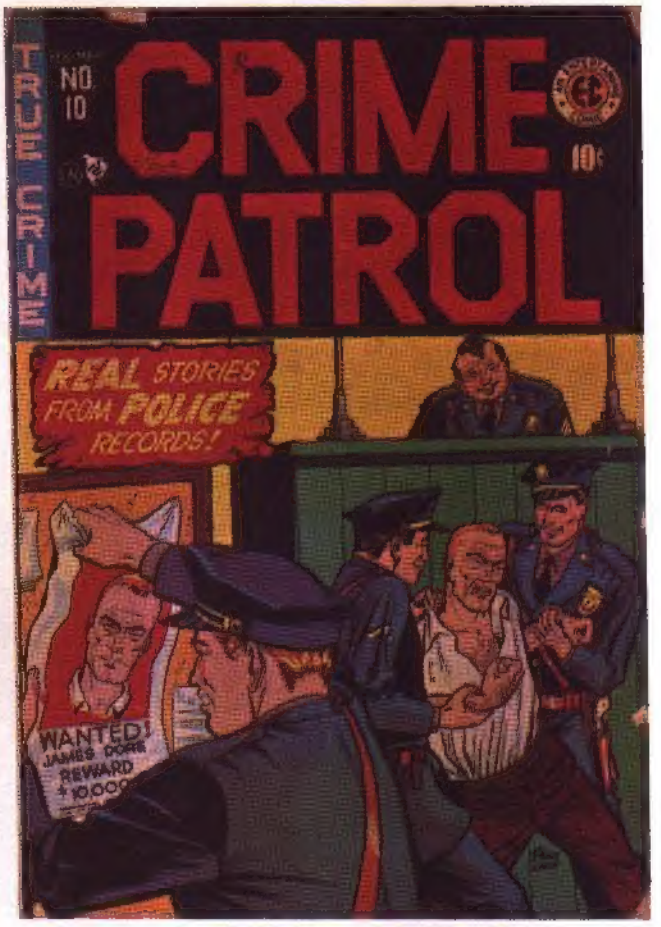

NO. 8
WAR
AGAINST
CRIME!
10¢
GO AHEAD... LET HIM HAVE IT! THE DOUBLE-CROSSER! HE WAS SUPPOSED TO THROW THIS FIGHT!
NO YOU DON'T, YOU MUGS! DROP THAT IRON! THIS IS THE LAST FIGHT YOU'LL EVER TRY TO FIX!
W-WHAT GORP! "THE KID" RATTED ON US!



Crime Patrol Covers © 1948, 1949 the respective Copyright Holders.

TRUE CRIME
NO. 9
CRIME PATROL
10¢
REAL STORIES FROM POLICE RECORDS!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REAL STORIES FROM POLICE RECORDS!
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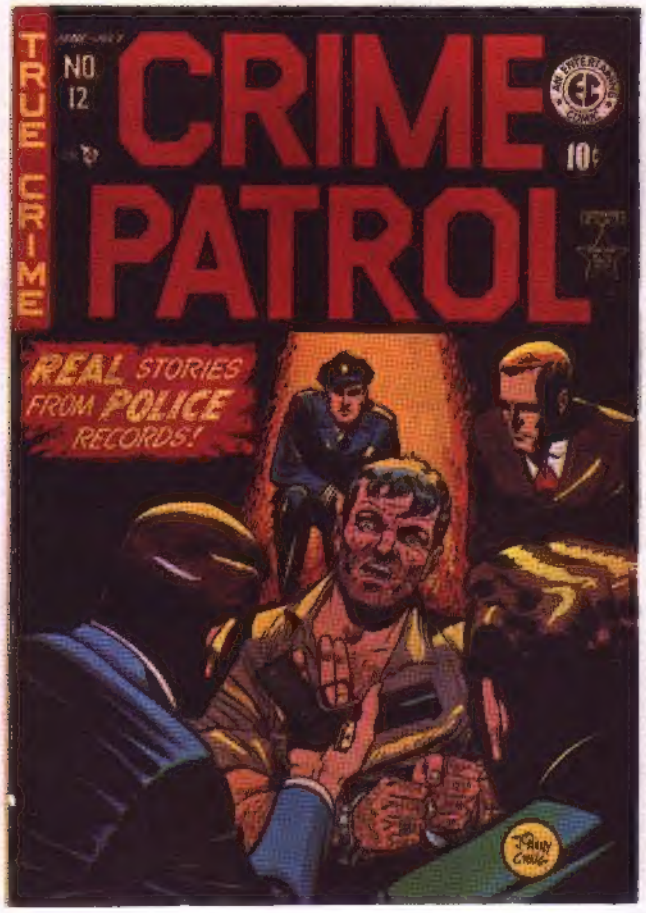
TRUE CRIME
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REAL STORIES FROM POLICE RECORDS!
Jack Davis

TRUE CRIME
NO. 13
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REAL STORIES FROM POLICE RECORDS!
Jack Davis

(LETTERS continued from pg. 56)

I've heard that there was an EC staff party back in the early fifties at which one of the crew brought a movie camera and took a roll of the entire EC staff having a good time. It would be nice to see some blown up stills from that movie even if they were not of good quality.

— Christopher Robertson
North Vancouver, Canada

Thanks to *Squa Tront* (and *Witzend* # 6) all the stories of the never published 3D # 3 are finally now available to us EC addicts. There are other EC stories that I would love to see gracing the pages of *Squa Tront:* "Came the Dawn," the never published Frank Frazetta rendition for Picto-Fiction, and the early EC educational pamphlets like "The KO Punch" by Feldstein and collaborators. — Jack Bierley
Jersey Shore, Pa.

It would seem you're running out of material. Nearly everything in # 7 is just non-EC stuff by EC artists.

Did you know that Frazetta did part of "Came the Dawn" for Warren, but it was never used. Can you get ahold of it? — Michael Oliveri
Washington, D.C.

Frazetta fans should know that there are four panels from "Came the Dawn" in the Frazetta Memory Book, *published in conjunction with the Frazetta Exhibit/Convention held in Stroudsberg, Pa. in 1977. (This may still be available from some dealers.) We've heard that Frazetta doesn't want the rest of the story printed.*

Squa Tront *is not running cover reproductions of EC horror (or other New Trend) covers because these should eventually all be available in Russ Cochran's books. Cochran will also be running the* Two-Fisted Tales Annuals *covers, which is why we're not running those, although they were promised last issue.*

Kurtzman was the one who made films of an EC party and staff outing; these were shown at the 1972 EC convention. Quite aside from the possibility of frame blow-ups, there are enough photos of the EC staff and offices taken in the fifties floating around to fill a book—and maybe someday we'll do that.

Incidentally, virtually everyone who wrote a letter of comment on the last issue has been represented in this letters page (not counting the occasional "P.S. Keep it up" added to back issue orders). This means that less than five per 1,000 readers write a letter of comment. There's nothing wrong with that; no one should have to write a letter.

But the contents of a magazine like this are a mix between what the editor wants to do and what he thinks the readers want to see. And information on what the readers think is being provided by less than 0.5% of them. Letter writers don't govern the contents of Squa Tront. *Nevertheless, you'll note that the contents of this issue are not especially in conflict with the letter page comments. Let's hear your opinion.*

Address all letters to: John Benson, 205 W. 80th Street, # 2E, New York, N.Y. 10024.

QUA BROT?

Despite what it says on the back of *Sally Forth* # 2, your editor never said that Wally Wood's "old EC stuff was better." (That was just curmudgeon Bill Pearson being funny; why, he can't even spell *Squa Tront* right.) As a matter of fact, Wally's current stuff is just fine. The ridiculous erotic whimsy that's his forte is well displayed currently in his series of oversized *Sally Forth* books that reprint his continuing comic strip of sex, space and silly satire. Issues 3 and 4 are available for $4 postpaid from Wally Wood, Box 44, Derby, Ct. 06148. The first issue of Wally's *Cannon* is also available; same price, same address.

Frankly, we're disappointed! We've been plugging a print by Harvey Kurtzman for three issues now, and only a few of you have ordered it. Maybe we just haven't adequately pointed out what a buy this is compared to other prints being offered today. Take Russ Cochran's print of Frank Frazetta's 'Golden Girl,' for example. Sure, Cochran examined each one with a magnifying glass and destroyed all those that weren't absolutely perfect. But Kurtzman *himself* worked directly with the pressmen during the production of his print to insure total fidelity. Sure, Cochran printed with seven colors to get a completely accurate four color effect. But Kurtzman used *three* colors to get an equally accurate *one* color effect! Sure, both sets are signed and numbered by the artist, but the Kurtzman print is limited to 500 copies, whereas practically anybody can pick up one of the 2,000 copies of the Frazetta print.

Then there's the matter of the subject. While Frazetta is content with just one naked girl and a few animals, Kurtzman's panorama of a Times Square pinball haven is crammed with over a hundred tourists, hoods, sailors, whores, pesky kids, bums and change attendants doing all sorts of silly things. Why, there's hardly anything funny at all happening in Frazetta's picture.

Best of all is the price. Cochran's print costs a hefty $50, while ours is a mere $6. And while Cochran's print is advertised in every common publication and crassly hawked at conventions, this modest little notice is the only place you'll hear about the Kurtzman print. So send $6 to Bill Peckmann, Room 403, 65 East 55th Street, New York, N.Y. 10022, to receive your Kurtzman print by first class return mail in a sturdy mailing tube. If we still haven't convinced you, you can get 'Golden Girl' for $50 from Russ Cochran, PO Box 437, West Plains, Mo. 65775.

This issue's fanzine article has finally covered a publication that's still in print. A very limited quantity of *The Mad Checklist* # 2 is still available at the original price of $4, plus 50¢ postage, from Fred von Bernewitz, 149 West 14th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

Bob Wiener's Archival Press has brought out a paperback collection of *Spacehawk*, strange early strips by the comics genius Basil Wolverton whose weird art added immeasurably to *Mad*. This book is beautifully produced, has an original Wolverton cover and an introduction by Ron Goulart. It can be ordered by mail for $3.95 plus 25 cents handling from Archival Press, Inc., Box 93, MIT Branch, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

EC fans should find of interest Bill Spicer's article on Al Feldstein in the first issue of *Ophemera*, a magazine with multi-media interests. For comics fans, there's also 12 pages of Wally Wood's "Cannon" strip, eight pages of rare pre-duck Carl Barks and ten pages of Roy G. Krenkel art. For this 68 page book send $4 to Bhob Stewart, 202 Highland Avenue, # 3, Somerville, Mass. 02143.

Turning the tables, Bhob Stewart's interview with Howard Nostrand, a very interesting fifties artist heavily influenced by EC, is still available in Bill Spicer's *Graphic Story Magazine* # 16. The issue also features a Wolverton story and an EC parody. A steal at $2.00 from Bill Spicer, 329 North Avenue 66, Los Angeles, California 90042.

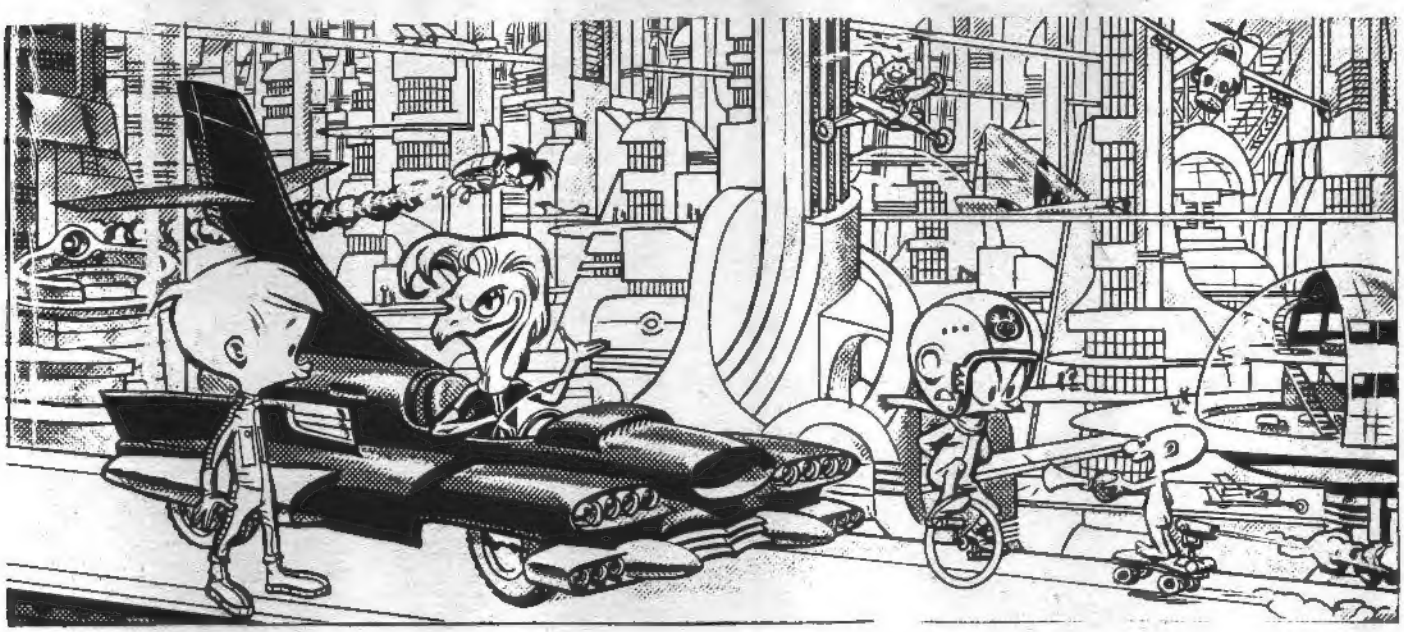
By George, we've been able to plug a lot of EC related publications this time around, haven't we?

ADDITIONS TO THE KRIGSTEIN BIBLIOGRAPHY

All-Time Sports Comics (Hillman), # 7, Oct.-Nov. 1949, "The One and Only Tex" 12 pages.

Hot Rod and Speedway Comics (Hillman), # 2, Sept.-Oct. 1952. "Bush Track Sentence" 6 pages.

Thanks to Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr. and Steven Lasker.



"SORCERY"

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VAULT KEEPER
OLD WITCH